

# Response Statement for Beluga Whale, Cumberland Sound population

October 22, 2004

**Common Name:** Beluga Whale, Cumberland Sound population

**Scientific Name:** *Delphinapterus leucas*

**Status assessment by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC):** Threatened

**Reason(s) for status designation provided by COSEWIC:** Numbers of belugas using Cumberland Sound have declined by about 1500 individuals between the 1920s and present. The population decline is believed to have been caused by hunting by the Hudson Bay Company into the 1940s and by the Inuit until 1979. Hunting has been regulated since the 1980s. Current quotas (41 in 2003) appear to be sustainable. Concerns have been raised about increased small vessel traffic and the associated noise of outboard motors, as well as fishery removals of Greenland halibut, a food of belugas.

**Occurrence:** Nunavut, Arctic Ocean

**Competent Minister(s):**

Minister of Fisheries and Oceans

**Provinces and territories to be consulted:**

Nunavut

**Applicable federal legislation:** Protected under the federal *Marine Mammal Regulations* under the *Fisheries Act*. Habitat protected under section 35 of the *Fisheries Act*.

**Conservation activities underway:** A recovery strategy and a management plan are under development.

**How the Minister of the Environment intends to respond to the assessment:** The Minister of Fisheries and Oceans will undertake consultations for a period of 9 months with the government of Nunavut, the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board, Aboriginal peoples, stakeholders, and the public on whether or not the Beluga Whale, Cumberland Sound population should be added to the *List of Wildlife Species at Risk* (Schedule 1) under the *Species at Risk Act*. Information respecting opportunities to comment and updates on the progress of consultations will be posted on the public registry. Following consultations, the Minister of the Environment will forward the COSEWIC assessment of the Beluga Whale, Cumberland Sound population to the GIC. The Minister of the Environment will then review the comments received and, following consultation with the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, will make a recommendation to the GIC on whether or not to add the Beluga Whale, Cumberland Sound population to the List. The GIC will make a decision within nine (9) months of having received the assessment.