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Deputy Minister

Sous-ministre

MAY 09 2011

Mr. Mikidjuk Akavak
Chairperson
Nunavut Wildlife Management Board
P.O. Box 1379
Iqaluit NU X0A 0H0

Dear Mr. Akavak:

Thank you for your correspondence of April 1 and 28, addressed to Minister Kent, regarding the upcoming public hearing of the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board to consider proposed modifications to the current total allowable harvest for the Davis Strait polar bear subpopulation.

As you know, Environment Canada recently facilitated a process through which the three jurisdictions that harvest from the Davis Strait subpopulation—Nunavut, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Quebec—came together for the first time to discuss total allowable harvest, as well as harvest allocation. This group, known as the Interjurisdictional Davis Strait Committee, first met in February 2010 to discuss these issues. The majority of the Committee's work was accomplished during a two-and-a-half day user-to-user meeting held in Kuujuaq, Quebec, in September 2010. This meeting involved management authorities, wildlife management boards and hunters from the three jurisdictions. Presentations on Aboriginal traditional knowledge and observations from hunters were an important part of these discussions, as well as new scientific population estimates presented by Dr. Stephen Atkinson, acting polar bear biologist from the Government of Nunavut, based on data collected between 2005 and 2007.

At the end of the meeting, the Committee concluded that the Davis Strait subpopulation is not currently declining and that the latest population estimates indicate that the subpopulation has likely increased in recent years. It also recognized that human-polar bear interactions are increasing, which is of particular concern to people who reside in this region of Canada.

In February 2011, the Interjurisdictional Davis Strait Committee forwarded a list of recommendations to the management authorities following extended discussions among the relevant jurisdictions, wildlife management boards and other stakeholders. Within its recommendations, the Committee suggested that



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a small increase in total allowable harvest would not unduly affect the Davis Strait subpopulation. Moreover, an increase in harvest may help address concerns associated with the increasing number of human-polar bear encounters.

However, concomitant with any increase in harvest is an agreement towards continued subpopulation monitoring, thereby ensuring that population numbers do not decline beyond an acceptable level. The importance of this continued monitoring was recognized by Committee members and was included in the recommendations put forth to the management authorities.

Although the management of polar bears falls under the purview of provincial and territorial governments and their respective wildlife management boards, Environment Canada supports an increase in the total allowable harvest of nine bears as outlined in the report presented by the Government of Nunavut's Department of Environment.

I appreciate your providing Environment Canada with the opportunity to comment on this important matter. Please accept my best wishes.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Boothe". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Paul Boothe