

SUBMISSION TO THE
NUNAVUT WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT BOARD
FOR

Information:

Decision: X

Issue: Qammartalik Cove Emerging Char Fishery – Written Hearing

Background:

In August 2015, Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) submitted an Arctic Char fishing plan to the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board (NWMB) for decision as per subsection 5.2.34(d)(i) of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement (NLCA). The fishing plan was developed in partnership with the Nattivak Hunters and Trappers Organization (HTO), our local co-management partner in Qikiqtarjuaq, Nunavut. A copy of the fishing plan and briefing note were sent to Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. (NTI) staff prior to submission to the NWMB for decision.

On September 17th 2015, DFO was copied on a letter from NTI to the NWMB, which challenged the NWMB's authority to approve the Qammartalik Cove Emerging Char Fishery Plan. The current fishing plan was based on how the Nattivak HTO advised us they want to fish Qammartalik Cove. It is our understanding that this decision was made by the HTO as per their authority under NLCA section 5.7.3(a) and section 5.7.3(d). Furthermore, the fishing plan also included a non-quota limitation for minimum gillnet mesh-size of 5.5 inches, which is consistent with a 2012 NWMB decision as per NLCA section 5.6.48. The submission to the NWMB requested the NWMB's approval on the mutually agreed upon plan that was co-developed by the HTO and DFO for the management and protection of the char fishery resource located in Qammartalik Cove.

The NWMB considered the request for approval of the Qammartalik Cove Emerging Char Fishery Plan at their quarterly Regular Meeting on September 23rd and In-Camera meeting on September 24th 2015. Subsequently, on October 9th 2015 the Board wrote to DFO and the Nattivak HTO to ask if they wanted to proceed with the proposal given NTI's September 17th letter. DFO and the Nattivak HTO both confirmed in writing, on October 20th and 28th 2015 respectively, that they wished to proceed. A follow up e-mail from the HTO to DFO on November 26th 2015 reconfirmed the HTO's interest in proceeding with an Exploratory Fishery at Qammartalik Cove.

Currently, there is one active exploratory Arctic Char fishery near Qikiqtarjuaq. In February 2015, DFO provided some hands on training and funding to support the biological sampling program at this exploratory fishery in the Confederation Fiord Area. The 2015 sampling program was a success; catch-effort information and 200 biological samples were collected. DFO plans to continue supporting the sampling program for the Confederation Fiord Area fishery in 2016 and furthermore, is prepared to expand the

sampling program to include the Qammartalik Cove fishery, after the NLCA decision-making process has been completed.

DFO staff have continued to work with communities and support them when they express interest in the development of new fisheries. In approximately the last five years, the number of active exploratory Arctic Char waterbodies has expanded from 12 waterbodies and one community to 25 waterbodies and five communities. Furthermore, we have seen the number and quality of biological samples that are submitted by fishers to DFO increase during this time frame.

Although, there have been some bumps along the way in trying to develop and implement Nunavut Fishery Regulations we would like to reiterate that there is a renewed energy with a focus of developing these Regulations. On November 18th 2015 Minister Tootoo wrote to Cathy Towtongie, President of NTI, to directly inform her of his interest in collaborating with NTI, NWMB, and the Government of Nunavut in advancing the development of the Nunavut Fishery Regulations. Minister Tootoo affirmed that this is “a high priority for this Department and an important tool for the management and development of fisheries in Nunavut.”

Recommendations:

DFO still supports the proposal as submitted by the Nattivak HTO seeking approval from the NWMB for the Qammartalik Cove Emerging Char Fishery Plan.

DFO also supports the NWMB’s authority to make such a decision as set out in NLCA Subsection 5.2.34(d)(i).

Consultations: DFO Central & Arctic Region

Prepared by: Resource Management – Northern Operations
Fisheries and Oceans Canada

Date: Feb. 10, 2016