

Submission to the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board

February 26, 2025

FOR

Information :

Decision: X

Issue: To seek approval from the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board (NWMB) for the establishment of a Marine Protected Area by Ministerial Order under the *Oceans Act* in Qikiqtait.

Background:

(a) How the issue relates to the NWMB mandate;

The establishment of a conservation area is directly related to the protection of wildlife and wildlife habitat under the *Nunavut Agreement*, and is located with the Nunavut Settlement Area.

(b) Why the issue is being presented;

Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) is seeking NWMB approval for the establishment of a marine conservation area in Qikiqtait through the designation of a Marine Protected Area (MPA) by Ministerial Order (or "Order") under the *Oceans Act*, s35.1(2). This issue is pursuant to articles 5.2.34(a), 9.3.2, 15.2.1, and 15.3.4 of the *Nunavut Agreement*:

- Section 5.2.34(a): *"approve the establishment, disestablishment, and changes to boundaries of Conservation Areas, related to management and protection of wildlife and wildlife habitat."*
- Section 9.3.2: *"The establishment, disestablishment or changing of the boundaries of Conservation Areas related to management and protection of wildlife habitat shall be subject to the approval of the NWMB pursuant to Sub-section 5.2.34(a). Conservation Areas shall be co- managed by Government and the DIO as provided in Section 9.3.7."*
- Section 15.2.1: *"If a Park or Conservation Area is established and that Park or Conservation Area partially extends beyond the marine areas, Article 8 or 9, as the case requires, shall apply to that entire Park or Conservation Area."*
- Section 15.3.4: *"Government shall seek the advice of the NWMB with respect to any wildlife management decisions in Zones I and II which would affect the substance and value of Inuit harvesting rights and opportunities within the marine areas of the Nunavut Settlement Area. The NWMB shall provide relevant information to Government that would assist in wildlife management beyond the marine areas of the Nunavut Settlement Area."*

(c) The key facts and circumstances relating to the issue; and

Qikiqtait comprises the waters surrounding the Belcher Islands of southeastern Hudson Bay. The entire boundary of the proposed Qikiqtait MPA falls within the Nunavut Settlement Area. The proposed boundaries of Qikiqtait are adjacent to the community of Sanikiluaq.

Qikiqtait is a unique and important environment largely because it comprises valuable ecosystem components that includes: 1) Strong upwelling and a recurrent biologically important polynya system

in the winter. 2) Large river plume and estuaries providing nutrient-rich water to the Qikiqtait region; 3) A productive benthic invertebrate community; 4) Large aggregations of common eider (*Somateria mollissima sedentaria*); 5) Migratory Arctic char (*Salvelinus alpinus*) and subsistence foods such as scallops, sea urchin and sea cucumber; 6) Resident marine mammals such as Atlantic walrus (*Odobenus rosmarus rosmarus*), bearded seal (*Erignathus barbatus*), beluga whale (*Delphinapterus leucas*), polar bear (*Ursus maritimus*), and ringed seal (*Pusa hispida*); as well as 7) Feeding and calving areas for a proportion of these marine mammal species. Qikiqtait is a hotspot for marine biodiversity. The polynya system's open water provides a critical habitat for a diverse range of marine animals. The availability of open water in an otherwise icy environment allows for increased primary productivity.

The initial boundaries of the proposed Qikiqtait MPA were based on an evaluation conducted by Fisheries and Oceans Canada in 2011 to identify Ecologically and Biologically Significant Areas throughout Canada's Arctic. The boundaries were further refined in collaboration with the community of Sanikiluaq and the Qikiqtani Inuit Association (QIA).

Protection under a Ministerial Order MPA would freeze the footprint of activities in the area, for a period of up to five years. This would mean that activities that have lawfully occurred in the area over the 12 months prior to designation (or that were authorized by a federal or territorial permit, licence, or some other form of express authorization to occur but have not yet taken place) would be allowed to continue for the duration of the Order. For the duration of the Ministerial Order, no new human activities, other than Inuit activities provided for in the *Nunavut Agreement* and the *Nunavik Agreement*, and marine scientific research, and activities carried out for purposes of public safety, national defence, national security or law enforcement, or in response to emergency situations provided for under subsection 35.1(3) of the *Oceans Act*, would be allowed to occur in the area following this proposed designation.

DFO has consulted with the community of Sanikiluaq, QIA, the Government of Nunavut, stakeholders and other federal departments to identify existing and authorized (i.e., ongoing) activities in the proposed Qikiqtait MPA.

The proposed Order would be covered under the Qikiqtait and Sarvarjuaq Inuit Impact and Benefit Agreement (IIBA), currently being negotiated by the Government of Canada and QIA.

(d) The estimated time required to orally present the issue (excluding questions/discussion).

DFO and QIA will deliver a 30-minute PowerPoint presentation (included with this submission) that provides an overview of the proposal to establish a Ministerial Order in Qikiqtait.

Consultation:

(a) The means of consultation;

In November 2023 and April 2024, the Qikiqtait and Sarvarjuaq Working Group (the Working Group), represented by DFO, Environment and Climate Change Canada, QIA and the Government of Nunavut, consulted with the Sanikiluaq Qikiqtait Steering Committee (represented by the Sanikiluaq Hunters and Trappers Association, the Sanikiluaq Hamlet, and the Arctic Eider Society), and the public of Sanikiluaq.

In November 2023, Working Group members met with the 18 residents of Sanikiluaq from the Hamlet,

Hunters and Trappers Association and the Sanikiluaq Qikiqtait Steering Committee to conduct a two day-long meeting featuring presentations on the proposed MPA by Ministerial Order, Fisheries Management, Qikiqtait Terrestrial Protection and the Qikiqtani Regional Conservation Model. Working Group members also met with the Sanikiluaq general public on the proposed MPA by Ministerial Order under the *Oceans Act*. This first round of consultations focused on introducing the proposed Qikiqtait MPA, as well as discussing short and long-term protection goals and their associated timelines. A major focal point of the presentation was introducing the MPA's draft Conservation Objectives for discussion and distributing community surveys. The Sanikiluaq Qikiqtait Steering Committee provided updates on community priorities and community-led initiatives. QIA's vision for long-term protection for Qikiqtait and how this relates to the community's priorities was also discussed.

Similarly, in April 2024, the Working Group (represented by Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Environment and Climate Change Canada and the Qikiqtani Inuit Association) held a two and a half days meeting with the Sanikiluaq Qikiqtait Steering Committee. There was also an evening meeting with the public of Sanikiluaq with similar presentations. During this round of consultations, details of the regulatory intent for the proposed Marine Protected Area by Ministerial Order were explained. This included an overview of economic activities or potential activities for the area and what activities have been documented as occurring within the proposed Qikiqtait MPA. The boundaries for the proposed MPA were also reviewed in detail.

Following the consultations, in September 2024, a "What We Heard" Report was circulated to the Arctic Eider Society, the Hunters and Trappers Association, and the Hamlet Council summarizing the feedback received during these consultations. Edits to the report were provided by the Hunters and Trappers Association and the Arctic Eider Society. These edits were incorporated and a final version of the "What We Heard Report" is included with this submission.

In July 2024 letters were sent to industry and other stakeholders introducing Qikiqtait and proposing marine protection in the region using a Ministerial Order MPA. DFO requested information about ongoing activities in the region and invited stakeholders to comment on the proposal for a Ministerial Order MPA in Qikiqtait. Stakeholder groups included territorial stakeholders, environmental non-government organizations (ENGOS), fishing industry, shipping industry, cruise ship industry, oil and gas and mining industries, tour operators, and academia. In October 2024 a second round of letters were sent to stakeholders and industry to share proposed regulations for the Qikiqtait Study Area and to seek any comments or feedback.

DFO provided an update to the NWMB at its October 31, 2024 quarterly meeting to notify that a submission and presentation would be made for their approval in February 2025.

DFO submitted a proposal to the Nunavut Planning Commission (NPC) for conformity determination on November 6 2024, on November 13 NPC accepted the proposal for review. On November 15, 2024 NPC referred the proposal to the Nunavut Impact Review Board (NIRB) for further screening and public comment period.

DFO presented to the Qikiqtaaluk Wildlife Board (QWB) on the proposal on November 27, 2024 providing information on the community support letters received and notifying the Board that DFO would be seeking their endorsement. DFO will continue to engage the QWB on this site.

(b) A list of the organizations consulted and an estimate of the number of individuals consulted, including members of the public; and

Table 1. List of community organizations consulted in November 2023 and April 2024 and estimated number of individuals. All meetings were in person and individuals represent adult participants. The Sanikiluaq Qikiqtait Steering Committee has representation from the Hunters and Trappers, the Hamlet, the Mayor, Arctic Eider Society and other community members.

Community Group	Date of Consultation	Estimated Number of Individuals
Sanikiluaq Qikiqtait Steering Committee	November 2023	18
	April 2024	18
Sanikiluaq Public	November 2023	96
	April 2024	54

Stakeholders in Nunavut were engaged through letters distributed by emails. Stakeholders were identified with assistance from the Government of Nunavut and the Qikiqtani Inuit Association. The stakeholders engaged in this process included the following: Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, Nunavut Wildlife Management Board (NWMB), Nunavut Water Board, Qikiqtaaluk Wildlife Board, WWF-Canada, Oceans North, Ecology Action Centre, Arctic Eider Society, Canadian Wildlife Federation, Nunavut Fisheries Association, relevant stakeholders within the Eastern Arctic Groundfish Stakeholder Advisory Committee, Northern Shrimp Advisory Committee, Prairies and Northern Region-Canadian Marine Advisory Council, Nunavut Eastern Arctic Shipping Inc., Shipping Federation of Canada, Woodward Group of Companies, Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators, Northwest Territories and Nunavut Chamber of Mines, Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, Travel Nunavut, Keewaytinook Okimakanak, ArcticNet, Nunavut Research Institute, Amundsen Science, RV William Kennedy, Memorial University, Hudson Bay Consortium, Arctic Security Consultants, Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC), Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK), Mushkegowuk Council, Cree Nation Government, Grand Council of the Cree, Eeyou Marine Region Wildlife Board, Eeyou Marine Region Impact Review Board, Eeyou Marine Region Planning Commission, Makkivik Corporation, Kativik Regional Government, Regional Nunavimmi Uumajulirijiit Katutjiqatigiinninga, Nunavik Marine Region Wildlife Board, Nunavik Marine Region Impact Review Board, and Nunavik Marine Region Planning Commission.

(c) A summary of the results, including any responses or accommodations to issues, concerns, etc. raised during the consultations.

Community interest in protecting Qikiqtait is based largely on the area’s ecological importance and significance to Inuit (past, present and future). The Sanikiluaq Hunters and Trappers and the Hamlet Council were in favour of the Ministerial Order MPA, and indicated the importance of Inuit Qaujimaqatigiangit, community input and decision-making in future decisions associated with long-term protection. There was an emphasis from the community of Sanikiluaq to remain at the forefront of conservation management and prioritize local leadership. See the enclosed “Consultation and Engagement Summary” and “What We Heard” documents for additional details.

Key take-aways from community consultations include:

- **Sanikiluaq Qikiqtait Steering Committee:** There has been a long history of environmental conservation work led by the community of Sanikiluaq and there is a desire to remain active and included in management decisions regarding marine protection in Qikiqtait. There is a strong desire for marine protection with the ability to explore inshore fisheries development.
- **The public of Sanikiluaq:** Meeting participants communicated support to protect Qikiqtait, they voiced their desire for employment opportunities arising from the development of the proposed Qikiqtait MPA. They also wanted to have updates about the progress with accessible language.
- **Letters of Support Received:** Following in-person consultations, letters in support of the proposal were received from the Sanikiluaq Hunter and Trappers Association, the Arctic Eider Society and the Sanikiluaq Hamlet Council. The Government of Nunavut also provided a letter in support of the proposed Qikiqtait Ministerial Order MPA.

At the request of the Government of Nunavut, Fisheries and Oceans Canada sought information from Kuhkenah (KNET), a company interested in surveying areas within the proposed Qikiqtait boundaries toward the possibility of laying fiber optic cable. KNET informed Fisheries and Oceans Canada that at present, their plans did not include Sanikiluaq in the fiber optic connectivity. After discussions with Fisheries and Oceans Canada, KNET advised that their planned activities would not fall within the proposed Qikiqtait boundaries.

Makkivik's Department of Environment, Wildlife and Research reached out to Fisheries and Oceans Canada requesting additional information about the proposed Qikiqtait MPA. In September 2024 Fisheries and Oceans Canada conducted a presentation including information about the regulatory intent. In addition, DFO provided more detailed information about the proposed Ministerial Order MPA as well as what activities would be allowed. There was no follow-up information requested.

DFO sent notifications to partners, the Sanikiluaq Hunters and Trappers Association and the Sanikiluaq Hamlet Council, as well as stakeholders in advance of pre-publication of the proposed new regulation in Canada Gazette, Part I. This 30-day public comment period will open during December and close mid-January.

Recommendation:

DFO is recommending that NWMB approves the establishment of a Marine Protected Area by Ministerial Order under the *Oceans Act* in Qikiqtait. A decision is requested by April 1, 2025.

Prepared by: Lauren Candlish, Arctic Region – Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Marine Planning and Conservation Program

Date: February 26, 2025.

Request for Nunavut Wildlife Management Board Approval of a Ministerial Order Marine Protected Area (MPA) in Qikiqtait

Consultation and Engagement Summary

Partnerships

Since 2019, the Government of Canada and QIA have been working together to identify options for the conservation and protection of Qikiqtait and other sites within the Qikiqtani Region of Nunavut. In 2021 a Qikiqtait and Sarvarjuaq Working Group (the Working Group) was created to advance the conservation and protection of the proposed Qikiqtait and Sarvarjuaq MPAs. The Qikiqtait and Sarvarjuaq Working Group consist of members from the Qikiqtani Inuit Association (QIA), Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO), Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC), Transport Canada and the Government of Nunavut. The Working Group has supported the required processes to create the two potential Marine Protected Areas by Ministerial Order. The Working Group also provided awareness and shared information with the Inuit Impact and Benefit Agreement (IIBA) negotiation table as needed, with the objective to work in parallel. Only DFO, ECCC, QIA and the Government of Nunavut travelled to the communities as part of the consultations for Qikiqtait.

Community Consultations

In 2019, the community-led Sanikiluaq Qikiqtait Steering Committee (SQSC), comprised of representation from the Sanikiluaq Hunters and Trappers (HTA), the Sanikiluaq Hamlet Council and the Arctic Eider Society, was formed to advance Inuit environmental stewardship in and around Sanikiluaq. There are 18 members in the SQSC and it includes the chair of the Sanikiluaq HTA, the Mayor of Sanikiluaq, and the Executive Director of the Arctic Eider Society. The SQSC is the primary point of contact in Sanikiluaq on conservation matters. The SQSC met with QIA to assert their position that conservation in Qikiqtait must remain a community-driven process while expressing their support for the Government of Canada's proposed approach to protecting the area. QIA supported the SQSC's vision, and worked with the community to secure funding via the Canada Nature Fund while IIBA negotiations were underway.

Virtual meetings between the SQSC, QIA and the Government of Canada (represented by DFO and ECCC) began in July 2020 to support resource inventory activities in Qikiqtait. In 2021 and 2022, the SQSC further advanced its community-driven efforts to implement their conservation programs, including a wide variety of sea ice, oceanographic and wildlife monitoring programs.

Representatives of the Qikiqtait and Sarvarjuaq Working Group with members from QIA, DFO, ECCC and the Government of Nunavut, conducted two rounds of consultations. The first round of consultations occurred in Sanikiluaq, Nunavut between November 7 - 8 2023. During the November 2023 consultations, surveys were handed out to Sanikiluarmit present at the consultations, with 27 respondents in total. The survey consisted of three questions regarding the objectives of the proposed Qikiqtait MPA by Ministerial Order. The second round of consultations took place from April 16 - 18 2024. During the April 2024 consultations, surveys were also handed out, with 16 respondents in total. The second survey consisted of 11 questions about local use of the Qikiqtait area. The purpose of the second survey was to document the current and ongoing local activities being undertaken within the proposed boundaries of the MPA. The survey questions from the two rounds of consultations and a summary of the responses are included in the What We Heard Report.

On November 7, 2023, the 18 members of the SQSC hosted the Working Group members in the Qikiqtait Centre board room and provided updates on community priorities and community-led initiatives. This information was complementary to the focused conversations around marine and terrestrial protection for Qikiqtait. On November 8, 2023, Working Group members again met with the SQSC to conduct a day-long meeting featuring presentations on the proposed MPA by Ministerial Order, Fisheries Management, Qikiqtait Terrestrial Protection and the Qikiqtani Regional Conservation Model.

Working Group members also met with the Sanikiluaq general public on November 8, 2023, in the multi-purpose hall of Sanikiluaq High School. The meeting featured a presentation on the proposed MPA by Ministerial Order with DFO under the *Oceans Act*. QIA's long-term protection vision for Qikiqtait and how this relates to the community's priorities was also discussed. Simultaneous interpretation was provided by the Chair of Sanikiluaq Hunters and Trappers Organization. A total of 96 adult community members were present for this meeting.

On April 16, 2024, the Working Group returned to Sanikiluaq in the Qikiqtait Centre to engage in the second round of consultations, with the first day involving presentations from DFO, ECCC and QIA updating community members on progress to date, sharing the proposed boundaries of the MPA, and distributing surveys to determine from community members what activities are taking place within the proposed MPA boundaries. On April 17, 2024, the Working Group reconvened in the Qikiqtait Centre during the morning to continue discussions and questions. On April 17, a public meeting was held in the multi-purpose hall of Sanikiluaq High School with simultaneous interpretation into Inuktitut. The meeting featured similar presentations to what was shared with the SQSC, the proposed MPA boundaries were shared with the public, and a question period occurred. A total of 54 adult community members were present. On April 18, 2024, a presentation from Fisheries Management occurred, and the topic of emerging fisheries was discussed in relation to the proposed MPA and Sanikiluaq's interests.

There was discussion by community members about the approach for protecting the marine environment, with some indicating their support for the proposed Marine Protected Area by Ministerial Order. Discussions centered around local infrastructure interests, concerns about the health of rivers that flow into Qikiqtait, the importance of emergency response and prioritizing working together with adjacent Nunavik and Cree community members. In general, there was a lot of support indicated for protecting Qikiqtait, and many requests for communities to be involved in the long-term management of the area. DFO informed community members that after the second round of consultations were complete, they would receive a report summarizing the feedback received during consultations as well as a request for a letter to formally support the establishment of Qikiqtait as a Marine Protected Area by Ministerial Order.

In September 2024 DFO distributed a "What We Heard Report" to the Sanikiluaq Hunters and Trappers, the Arctic Eider Society and the Sanikiluaq Hamlet in English and Sanikiluaq Inuktitut dialect. This report included meeting summaries for all meetings held in both rounds of consultations, feedback received from the community and responses to questions that came up during the meetings. The report also included results of the survey distribution and informed recipients that DFO would be seeking Support Letters as a next step in the process toward establishment.

In October 2024 DFO received letters in support of the proposed Ministerial Order MPA from the Sanikiluaq Hunters and Trappers, the Arctic Eider Society and the Sanikiluaq Hamlet. The Government of Nunavut has also provided a letter of support.

Other Stakeholders

Stakeholders were identified with assistance from the Government of Nunavut and the Qikiqtani Inuit Association. The stakeholders engaged in this process included the following: Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, Nunavut Wildlife Management Board (NWMB), Nunavut Water Board, Qikiqtaaluk Wildlife Board, WWF-Canada, Oceans North, Ecology Action Centre, Arctic Eider Society, Canadian Wildlife Federation, Nunavut Fisheries Association, relevant stakeholders within the Eastern Arctic Groundfish Stakeholder Advisory Committee, Northern Shrimp Advisory Committee, Prairies and Northern Region-Canadian Marine Advisory Council, Nunavut Eastern Arctic Shipping Inc., Shipping Federation of Canada, Woodward Group of Companies, Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators, Northwest Territories and Nunavut Chamber of Mines, Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, Travel Nunavut, Keewaytinook Okimakanak, ArcticNet, Nunavut Research Institute, Amundsen Science, RV William Kennedy, Memorial University, Hudson Bay Consortium, Arctic Security Consultants, Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC), Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK), Mushkegowuk Council, Cree Nation Government, Grand Council of the Cree, Eeyou Marine Region Wildlife Board, Eeyou Marine Region Impact Review Board, Eeyou Marine Region Planning Commission, Makkivik Corporation, Kativik Regional Government, Regional Nunavimmi Uumajulirijiit Katutjiqatigiinninga, Nunavik Marine Region Wildlife Board, Nunavik Marine Region Impact Review Board, and Nunavik Marine Region Planning Commission.

DFO also engaged all implicated federal departments, including (but not limited to) ECCC, Transport Canada, Crown-Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, Parks Canada, Natural Resources Canada, Canadian Coast Guard, Global Affairs Canada, and Department of National Defense.

In July 2024, DFO distributed letters to the identified stakeholders. These letters were provided in English, French and Inuktitut. The first letter informed stakeholders that the Qikiqtani Inuit Association, the Government of Nunavut and the Government of Canada were assessing short-term protection measures for Qikiqtait. The letter also introduced Marine Protected Areas by Ministerial Order as the proposed protection tool and requested feedback and information about ongoing and anticipated activities in the area. In October 2024, a second letter was distributed to stakeholders. The second letter outlined the proposed regulations for Qikiqtait and provided a list of the classes of ongoing activities documented. In the second letter, stakeholders were invited to provide comments and feedback on the proposed regulations. No feedback or comments on the proposed regulations were received.

In addition to the distribution of two stakeholder letters, DFO consulted with stakeholders further at their request. At the request of the Government of Nunavut, Fisheries and Oceans Canada sought information from Kuhkenah (KNET), a company interested in surveying areas within the proposed Qikiqtait boundaries toward the possibility of laying fiber optic cable. KNET informed Fisheries and Oceans Canada that at present, their plans did not include Sanikiluaq in the fiber optic connectivity. After discussions with Fisheries and Oceans Canada, KNET advised that their planned activities would not fall within the proposed Qikiqtait boundaries.

Makkivik's Department of Environment, Wildlife and Research reached out to Fisheries and Oceans Canada requesting additional information about the proposed Qikiqtait MPA. In September 2024 Fisheries and Oceans Canada conducted a presentation including information about the plans for Qikiqtait to become a Marine Protected Area by Ministerial Order. In addition, Fisheries and Oceans Canada provided more detailed information about a Ministerial Order MPA as well as what activities will be allowed if Qikiqtait becomes an MPA. There was no follow-up information requested.

DFO provided an update to the NWMB at its October 31, 2024, quarterly meeting to notify that a submission and presentation would be made for their approval in February 2025.

DFO submitted a proposal to the Nunavut Planning Commission (NPC) for conformity determination on November 6, 2024, on November 13 NPC accepted the proposal for review. On November 15, 2024, NPC referred the proposal to the Nunavut Impact Review Board (NIRB) for further screening and public comment period.

DFO presented to the Qikiqtaaluk Wildlife Board (QWB) on the proposal on November 27, 2024, providing information on the community support letters received and notifying the Board that DFO would be seeking their endorsement. DFO will continue to engage the QWB on this site.

DFO sent notifications to partners, community HTAs and hamlet councils, as well as stakeholders in advance of pre-publication of the proposed new regulation in Canada Gazette, Part I. This 30-day public comment period will open during December and close mid-January.

Request for Nunavut Wildlife Management Board Approval of a Ministerial Order Marine Protected Area in Qikiqtait

Project Description

1. Request for Approval

Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) Marine Planning and Conservation Program, is seeking approval from the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board (NWMB) to establish a marine conservation area in Qikiqtait through designation of a Marine Protected Area (MPA) by Ministerial Order (or “Order”) under the *Oceans Act*, s35.1(2), consistent with the Nunavut Agreement s9.3.2 (establishment of conservation areas).

2. Collaboration and Proposal for a Ministerial Order MPA under the *Oceans Act*

Qikiqtait has been put forward by the community of Sanikiluaq and the Qikiqtani Inuit Association (QIA) as an important area to protect due to its importance to Inuit in providing key habitat for ecologically and culturally significant species. With the support of the community of Sanikiluaq and the Government of Nunavut, DFO and QIA are pursuing the establishment of a Ministerial Order MPA under the *Oceans Act* in Qikiqtait to limit the impact of additional unforeseen stressors on the area while partners explore options for long-term protection.

This proposal for a Ministerial Order MPA in Qikiqtait requires the negotiation of an Inuit Impact and Benefit Agreement (IIBA) under the *Nunavut Agreement*. An IIBA between the Government of Canada and QIA is currently being negotiated and will be completed prior to establishment.

The Qikiqtait Study Area (Qikiqtait) is a marine area located within the Belcher Islands Ecologically and Biologically Significant Area (DFO 2011) in southeast Hudson Bay. In addition to supporting community interests for protection, the proposed MPA would contribute to Canada’s goal of conserving 25 per cent of its oceans by 2025, and mandate to increase Indigenous collaboration on marine conservation.

Establishment of an MPA in Qikiqtait would advance reconciliation with Inuit through self-determination, Inuit leadership and collaboration in marine conservation stewardship.

Objectives identified for the proposed Qikiqtait MPA are:

- a) To support the conservation, protection, and understanding of the marine environment around the Belcher Islands, including the wildlife and other species, that is of immense value to Inuit and Inuit culture; and
- b) To support Inuit leadership in the conservation of Qikiqtait to ensure the continuity of Inuit culture, values, and practices, including accumulating and passing down Inuit knowledge as well as Inuit stewardship and governance.

Protection under a Ministerial Order MPA would freeze the footprint of activities in the area, for a period of up to five years. This would mean that activities that have lawfully occurred in the area over the 12 months prior to designation (or that were authorized by a federal or territorial permit, licence, or some other form of express authorization to occur but have not yet taken place) would be allowed to continue for the duration of the Order. For the duration of the Ministerial Order, no new human activities, other than Inuit activities provided for in the *Nunavut Agreement* and the *Nunavik Agreement*, and marine scientific research, and activities carried out for purposes of public safety, national defence, national

security or law enforcement, or in response to emergency situations provided for under subsection 35.1(3) of the *Oceans Act*, would be allowed to occur in the area following this proposed designation.

The proposed Qikiqtait Ministerial Order MPA would prohibit all human activities that disturb, damage, destroy or remove from that MPA any unique geological or archeological features or any living marine organism or any part of its habitat or is likely to do so within the designated boundaries, except the following activities:

Classes of Ongoing Activities

For the purposes of paragraph 35.1(2)(a) of the *Oceans Act*, the following classes of activities are ongoing activities in the MPA:

- Hunting and trapping (including sport hunting)
- Fishing (including sport fishing)
- Harvesting of marine plants
- Constructing, dismantling, maintaining and repairing, and using of temporary structures on sea ice
- Marine navigation
- National defence activities carried out by the Department of National Defence
- Canadian Coast Guard activities carried out by the Canadian Coast Guard
- Tourism activities
- Recreational activities
- Educational activities
- Travel over sea ice using motorized vehicles and non-motorized methods
- Inuit Qaujjimajatuqangit and community-based research activities (including stewardship activities)
- Scientific research activities
- Filming and media content development

DFO has consulted with the community of Sanikiluaq, QIA, the Government of Nunavut, stakeholders and other federal departments to identify existing and authorized (i.e., ongoing) activities in the proposed Qikiqtait MPA.

Activities under the *Nunavut Agreement* and the *Nunavik Agreement*

The proposed Order would not apply with respect to rights of Inuit in the Nunavut Settlement Area, as provided for under the *Nunavut Agreement* and the *Nunavik Agreement*.

Public Safety

Any activity carried out on behalf of His Majesty for the purpose of public safety, national defence, national security, or law enforcement or carried out in response to an emergency (including environmental emergencies) would be allowed by the way of the statutory exception provided under subsection 35.1(3) of the *Oceans Act*, such as emergency search and rescue, response to shipping or aircraft accidents, national security requirements.

b. Ecological Importance

The proposed Qikiqtait MPA represents a portion of the Canadian Arctic that contains critical year-round and seasonally important habitat for a variety of aquatic species. Encompassing the Belcher Islands Archipelago, Qikiqtait is a unique, important environment and is comprised of valuable ecosystem components that includes: 1) Strong upwelling and a recurrent biologically important polynya system in the winter; 2) Large river plumes and estuaries; 3) A productive benthic invertebrate community; 4) Large aggregations of Common Eider (*Somateria mollissima sedentaria*); 5) Migratory Arctic Char (*Salvelinus alpinus*) and subsistence foods; 6) Resident marine mammals such as Atlantic Walrus (*Odobenus rosmarus rosmarus*), Bearded Seal (*Erignathus barbatus*), Beluga (*Delphinapterus leucas*), Polar Bear (*Ursus maritimus*), and Ringed Seal (*Pusa hispida*), and finally; 7) Feeding and calving areas for a proportion of these marine mammal species.

Some of the coldest summer sea-surface temperatures in coastal Hudson Bay, south of Southampton Island, are located in the Belcher Islands region. These cold summer sea temperatures suggest strong vertical mixing that in turn are highly productive with increasing nutrient availability in the summer months, resulting in improved primary productivity within the marine system.

There have been at least eight polynyas identified in the proposed Qikiqtait MPA (Yurkowski et al. 2023). The polynyas around the Belcher Islands are highly productive and support a wide range of marine life such as providing key habitats for Polar Bears, and overwintering and feeding zones for Beluga and Atlantic Walrus (Yurkowski, et al. 2023). The community of Sanikiluaq utilizes these polynyas to hunt seabirds and seals during the winter months, which further enhances food security in the community.

Draining towards the proposed Qikiqtait MPA is the Great Whale River, Boutin River, Nastapoka and La Grande River from the coast of Quebec and James Bay. Extensive plumes form at the mouth of the Great Whale River and La Grande River that extend far offshore, allowing nutrient-rich inputs to fuel primary productivity in the marine environment (Yurkowski et al. 2023).

The seafloor of the proposed Qikiqtait MPA harbors a diverse benthic community that is heavily influenced by river runoff and seasonal ice cover. The polynya to the west and on the northern end of the Belcher Islands (near Inukjuak) have among the highest biomass values and taxonomic richness in the Hudson Bay Complex (Pierrejean et al. 2020). There is strong interest from community members in Sanikiluaq for a fisheries economy in the proposed Qikiqtait MPA, particularly for Icelandic Scallop (*Chlamys islandica*) and Sea Cucumber (*Cucumaria frondosa*).

The Hudson Bay subspecies of Common Eiders, estimated at ~255,000 birds (Sea Duck Joint Venture 2018), are known to almost exclusively breed, forage and overwinter within the proposed Qikiqtait MPA, making them unique to the area. Within the community of Sanikiluaq, a large, sustainably managed fall harvest of Common Eiders provides community members with eider down, further reinforcing the importance of this seabird species.

Arctic Char provides local food security for Sanikiluaq and is an important prey species for resident Belugas (Yurkowski et al. 2023). Char are captured year round from both marine and freshwater habitats. Migrating Arctic Char are noted to be an important prey species for resident Beluga populations.

In the proposed Qikiqtait MPA, six marine mammal species reside year-round, with some being restricted to polynyas during the winter months: Atlantic Walrus, Polar Bear, Bearded Seal, Beluga, Harbor Seal and Ringed Seal (Yurkowski et al. 2023). Polynyas in the area allow these resident marine mammals to forgo energetically costly seasonal migrations. In addition, the following species are known to frequent the area on a seasonal basis: Killer Whale (*Orcinus orca*), Bowhead Whale (*Balaena mysticetus*), Harp Seal (*Pagophilus groenlandicus*) and Narwhal (*Monodon monoceros*).

Arctic temperatures are rising faster than the global average, with significant negative effects to sea ice. The Arctic marine environment surrounding the Belcher Islands is changing, where the open water season is greatly increasing in duration. The species found in Qikiqtait play a critical role in maintaining ecosystem health; however, data related to sea-ice composition and associated biota in this region are limited.

c. Socio-economic Considerations

A socio-economic analysis completed by DFO's Policy and Economic Sector in 2024 indicated that activities occurring in the Qikiqtait area included annual sealift operations, icebreaking activities, marine research vessel activity, subsistence and traditional wildlife harvesting, recreational activities, and tourism. Additional activities were informed through community consultations, as well as industry and stakeholder engagement, and included harvesting of Eider Duck down for commercial purposes, marine plants harvested to make baskets for sale, and media and filming activities. There is currently no oil and gas development in the area, nor marine mining operations. DFO's analysis, consultation with other Federal departments, community consultations, and industry and stakeholder engagement informed the list of ongoing activities presented above.

The majority of economic activity in this region is conducted in the community Sanikiluaq. Forecasted economic growth within the proposed Qikiqtait MPA is related to natural resource management and eco/cultural tourism. Due to the preservation of natural ecosystems that are associated with a protected area, an increase in eco/cultural tourism is possible.

Currently, shipping and navigation activities around the Belcher Islands for the purposes of community re-supply, bulk transport, subsistence fishing, passenger vessels/tourism, research, and government operations (e.g., ice breaking for safety and security) is expected to increase as climate change continues to lengthen the open-water season. The proposed Qikiqtait MPA will ensure that additional activities which may exacerbate these impacts are prohibited while partners advance longer-term management options for the area.

It is important to note that Sanikiluaq community members are in the early phases of exploring a small scale multi-species commercial fishery, targeting scallops and sea cucumbers. Additional consultation and research is required to determine the sustainability of these potential commercial fisheries. The proposed Ministerial Order MPA allows for fishing to continue as a class of ongoing activities and therefor would not impact this work.

4. Consultation and Engagement

Below is a short summary of the consultations and engagements that have occurred. A more detailed description of the consultations and engagements undertaken is provided in a separate “Consultation and Engagement Summary” document and in the “What We Heard” Report, both included in this submission.

a. Partnerships

Since 2019, the Government of Canada and QIA have been working together to identify options for the conservation and protection of Qikiqtait and other sites within the Qikiqtani Region of Nunavut. In 2021 a Qikiqtait and Sarvarjuaq Working Group (the Working Group) was created to advance the conservation and protection of the proposed Qikiqtait and Sarvarjuaq MPAs. The Working Group includes representatives from the Government of Canada, QIA and the Government of Nunavut.

a. Consultation and Engagement

In 2019, the community-led Sanikiluaq Qikiqtait Steering Committee (SQSC) was formed to advance Inuit environmental stewardship in and around Sanikiluaq. The SQSC is the primary point of contact for DFO on conservation matters and includes representatives of the Sanikiluaq Hunters and Trappers Association (HTA), the Arctic Eider Society, QIA, and the Hamlet of Sanikiluaq. Meetings between the SQSC, QIA and the Government of Canada (represented by DFO and ECCC) began in July 2020 to support resource inventory activities.

Representatives of the Government of Canada (DFO and ECCC), QIA and the Government of Nunavut conducted the first round of community consultations between November 7-8, 2023, in Sanikiluaq. Meetings were held with the Hamlet, HTA, SQSC and the broader community to share information on the area, seek feedback on a proposed approach to protection, and to address community questions and/or concerns. Topics discussed included the ongoing conservation work and priorities being advanced by the community of Sanikiluaq in this area, the connections with Cree and Nunavik communities and the greater Hudson Bay ecosystem, and the role of Sanikiluaq in connecting communities and ecosystem components across the Hudson Bay region. The proposed Qikiqtait MPA conservation boundary, protected rights secured under the *Nunavut Agreement* (including traditional harvesting rights), IIBA negotiation status, Sanikiluaq community interest in commercial fisheries for benthic species, and MPA priorities for Qikiqtait were discussed. There was also meaningful discussion around conservation and other objectives for the proposed Qikiqtait MPA, and the community’s vision for protecting the area for future generations. Confirmation was received from the HTA Board Chair that the draft objectives proposed for the Qikiqtait MPA reflected the community’s vision. The HTA Board Chair indicated that there was strong community support for the proposal.

Between April 15-18, 2024, DFO, ECCC, QIA and Government of Nunavut conducted a second round of community consultations in Sanikiluaq to seek feedback on DFO’s proposed regulatory intent for an MPA by Ministerial Order under the *Oceans Act* in Qikiqtait. The SQSC, HTA, and the community of Sanikiluaq were consulted. While the proposal was well-received, the community and QIA indicated the need for further discussions on the possibility of a commercial fishery in Qikiqtait and an approach for marine and terrestrial conservation over the long term. The SQSC and community of Sanikiluaq also identified the importance of incorporating Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit in DFO’s process to establish and manage MPAs under the *Oceans Act*. DFO is continuing to engage QIA and the SQSC on these issues.

In September 2024, the Working Group distributed a “What We Heard” report to the community of Sanikiluaq which summarized the feedback provided by community members during consultations. Letters in support of the proposed regulation were received from the three member organizations of the SQSC; the Sanikiluaq Hamlet Council, the Sanikiluaq HTA and the Arctic Eider Society. The Government of Nunavut has also provided a letter of support.

Other Stakeholders

DFO engaged with industry and key stakeholders on the proposed Qikiqtait MPA by Ministerial Order in two phases. Stakeholder groups engaged in this process included, but were not limited to: the Nunavut Water Board, Nunavut Wildlife Management Board, Qikiqtaaluk Wildlife Board, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc., Inuit Circumpolar Council, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGOS), commercial fishing industry, shipping industry, media industry, cruise ship industry, oil and gas and mining industries, tour operators, fiber optic industry, and academia. In July 2024, a letter was sent from all parties of the Working Group seeking input on any ongoing activities currently being conducted or planned within the Qikiqtait Study Area. Following this first round of engagement, in October 2024, DFO engaged these same stakeholders on its proposed regulatory intent for a Ministerial Order MPA in Qikiqtait, seeking their input.

DFO also engaged all implicated federal departments, including (but not limited to) ECCC, Transport Canada, Crown-Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, Parks Canada, Natural Resources Canada, Canadian Coast Guard, Global Affairs Canada, and Department of National Defense.

5. Establishment Timeline and Next Steps

If the NWMB approves DFO’s proposal to establish a Ministerial Order in Qikiqtait, DFO will proceed to publication of the Order in Canada Gazette, Part II, which designates the new MPA. Canada and its partners will continue to work toward long-term options for Qikiqtait, which includes the consideration of an Inuit Protected and Conserved Area.

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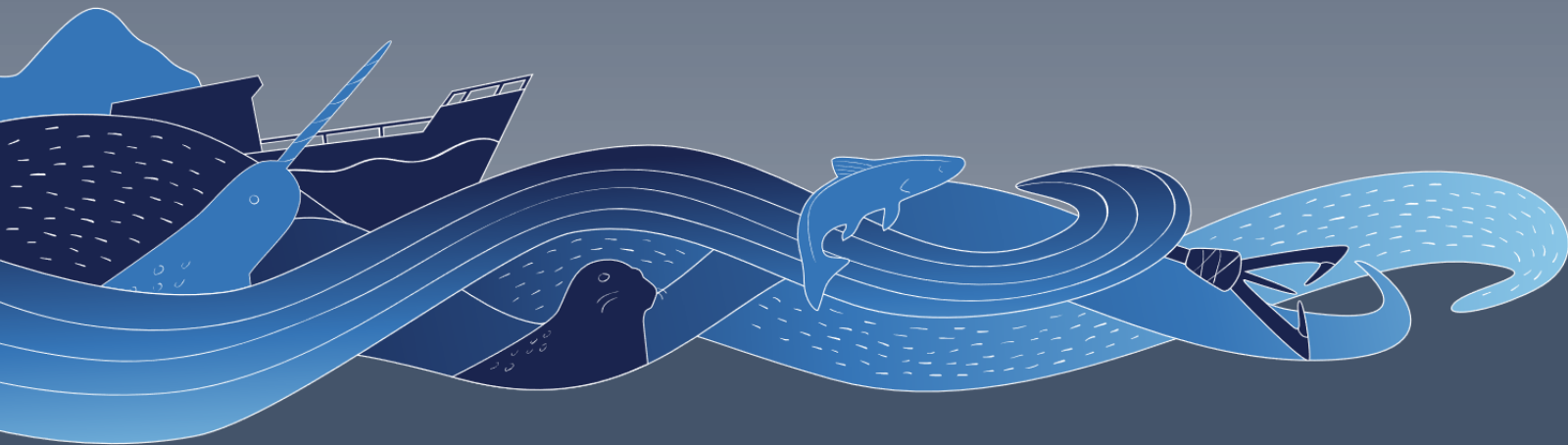


Fisheries and Oceans
Canada

Pêches et Océans
Canada

Proposal to Establish Ministerial Order Marine Protected Areas under the *Oceans Act* in Qikiqtait and Sarvarjuaq

Presentation to the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board
February 26, 2025



Canada 

Purpose

DFO is seeking NWMB's approval to establish Ministerial Order Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in Qikiqtait and Sarvarjuaq under the *Oceans Act*, which will be consistent with the Nunavut Agreement, s9.3.2



Sarvarjuaq

- Sarvarjuaq is located in northern Baffin Bay.
- Narrow channels help ice bridges form between Canada and Greenland, creating one of the largest recurring polynyas in the Arctic, the North Water Polynya.
- The polynya supports a large variety of marine life, including algae, fish, seabirds, and marine mammals.
- Sarvarjuaq is an important overwintering habitat and calving area, supporting the species harvested by communities throughout the Qikiqtani Region and beyond.
- The ice bridge has also been a method of travel for Inuit, connecting Canada and Greenland.



Proposed Ministerial Order MPA

- A Ministerial Order MPA freezes the footprint of ongoing activities in an area for a period of up to 5 years.
- This means that activities that are occurring, or are authorized to occur, in the year leading up to establishment are allowed to continue, but no new activities would be allowed for the duration of the Order.
- A joint Inuit Impact and Benefit Agreement (IIBA) for the proposed MPAs is being negotiated between the Government of Canada and QIA.
- The proposed MPAs would protect these vulnerable areas while partners consider long-term management and conservation needs for Qikiqtait and Sarvarjuaq, including Inuit Protected and Conserved Areas for both sites.

Proposed Ministerial Order MPA (cont)

Activities listed below would be allowed within the proposed Qikiqtait and Sarvarjuaq MPAs:

- Inuit activities provided for in the *Nunavut Agreement*
- All ongoing activities taking place 1 year prior to designation and activities that have otherwise been authorized to occur by applicable federal laws or by laws of a province/territory
- Marine scientific research
- Activities carried out for purposes of public safety, national defence, national security or law, or in response to emergency situations
- Exempted foreign activities

Classes of ongoing activities

The following have been identified as classes of ongoing activities in both Sarvarjuaq and Qikiqtait. These classes of activities will be allowed to continue under the Qikiqtait and Sarvarjuaq Ministerial Order MPAs:

- ✓ Hunting and trapping (including sport hunting)
- ✓ Fishing (including sport fishing)
- ✓ Harvesting of marine plants
- ✓ Constructing, dismantling, maintaining and repairing, and using of temporary structures on sea ice
- ✓ Marine navigation
- ✓ National defence activities carried out by the Department of National Defence
- ✓ Canadian Coast Guard activities carried out by the Canadian Coast Guard
- ✓ Tourism activities
- ✓ Recreational activities
- ✓ Educational activities
- ✓ Travel over sea ice using motorized vehicles and non-motorized methods
- ✓ Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit and community-based research activities (including stewardship activities)
- ✓ Scientific research activities
- ✓ Filming and media content development

Consultations Qikiqtait

November 2023 – April 2024:

Two rounds of in-person consultations with Sanikiluaq HTA, Sanikiluaq Hamlet Council, Arctic Eider Society, Sanikiluaq Qikiqtait Steering Committee and public of Sanikiluaq.

October 2024:

Letters in support of the Ministerial Order MPA were received from HTA, hamlet council and the Arctic Eider Society



Consultations Sarvarjuaq

October 2023 – June 2024: Two rounds of in-person consultations with the HTAs, hamlet councils and general public in Grise Fiord, Resolute Bay, Arctic Bay, Pond Inlet, Clyde River and Qikiqtarjuaq

May 2024: Newsletter distributed with consultation summary, objectives, an activities survey with return mail packaging provided and contact information

October 2024: Letters in support of the Ministerial Order MPA were received from all 6 community HTAs and hamlet councils

Stakeholder Engagement

- Stakeholders engaged were identified with assistance from the Government of Nunavut and the Qikiqtani Inuit Association.
- Letters were sent to stakeholders in English, French and Inuktitut. The first letters were distributed in July 2024. The second round of letters were sent in October 2024.
- DFO continues to be available to stakeholders as the process advances.

Nunavut Planning Commission (NPC) & Nunavut Impact Review Board (NIRB)

- DFO submitted the Qikiqtait and Sarvarjuaq proposals to the NPC for conformity determination as required under the Nunavut Planning and Project Assessment Act (NUPPAA).
- NPC referred the proposal to NIRB for further screening and a public comment period.

Pre-Publication in Canada Gazette, Part I

- DFO published its proposal to establish a new Ministerial Order MPA in Qikiqtait and Sarvarjuaq.
- The 30-day public comment period opened during December and closed in January.

Next Steps

If the NWMB approves of DFO's proposal to establish a new Ministerial Order MPA in Qikiqtait and Sarvarjuaq the next steps are:

- Signing of the IIBA between the Government of Canada and the Qikiqtani Inuit Association;
- Publication in Canada Gazette, Part II (designation of the new MPAs).

Table of Contents

- Acknowledgement** 3
- Our Team**..... 3
- Executive Summary** 4
 - Purpose..... 4
 - Summary of meetings..... 4
 - What we heard overall 5
- Meeting Summaries**..... 6
 - Hamlet, HTA and Sanikiluaq Qikiqtait Steering Committee Meetings November 7 – 8, 2023 6
 - Sanikiluaq Public Meeting November 8, 2023 7
 - Hamlet, HTA and Sanikiluaq Qikiqtait Steering Committee Meetings April 16 – 18 2024..... 8
 - Sanikiluaq Public Meeting April 17, 2024 9
- Community Surveys** 10
 - November 2023 – Conservation Objectives Survey 10
 - April 2024 – Activity Survey..... 11
- What We Heard** 12
 - General discussion on the Qikiqtait Marine Protected Area and the process 12
 - Protection, regulations and enforcement 12
 - Commercial fisheries 14
 - Rights under Nunavut Agreement, legal and financial implications 15
 - Sanikiluaq perspectives and priorities..... 15
 - Terrestrial Protection through an Inuit Protected and Conserved Area 16
 - Other Points of Discussion 17
- Next Steps** 18
- Appendix 1. Regulatory Intent for the Proposed Qikiqtait MPA** 19
- Appendix 2. Documented Activities Occurring in the Proposed Qikiqtait MPA**..... 24

Acknowledgement

The Qikiqtait and Sarvarjuaq Working Group would like to thank the community of Sanikiluaq for their time and hospitality during our community visits. We would especially like to thank the Hunters and Trappers Association, Hamlet Council, and the Arctic Eider Society for their participation and knowledge-sharing. Finally, we would like to thank the Sanikiluaq Qikiqtait Steering Committee for coordinating these meetings.

Our Team

The Qikiqtait and Sarvarjuaq Working Group consist of members from the Qikiqtani Inuit Association (QIA), Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO), Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC), Transport Canada and the Government of Nunavut. The working group has been supporting the required processes for Sarvarjuaq and Qikiqtait, to create the two potential Marine Protected Areas by Ministerial Order. Only DFO, ECCC, QIA and Government of Nunavut travelled to the communities as part of the consultations for Qikiqtait.

Working Group representatives who participated in the Sanikiluaq consultations included Rosanne D’Orazio (QIA), George Qulaut (QIA – April Meeting only), Bernie MacIsaac (Government of Nunavut), Lisa Pirie (ECCC), Bethany Schroeder (DFO - November meeting only), John Onita (DFO - November meeting only), Lauren Candlish (DFO - April meeting only), Elizabeth Worden (DFO - April meeting only) and Kevin Tallon (DFO - virtually for the November meeting and in person in April).

Executive Summary

Purpose

For the first round of consultations, representatives of the Qikiqtait and Sarvarjuaq Working Group, with members from Qikiqtani Inuit Association (QIA), Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC), and Government of Nunavut (Government of Nunavut), conducted community meetings in Sanikiluaq, Nunavut between November 7 - 8 2023. The second round of consultations took place from April 16 - 18 2024, with representatives from the same organizations and institutions in attendance.

The purpose of these two rounds of consultations was to discuss the collective knowledge of Qikiqtait, the proposed approach to short-term marine conservation by Ministerial Order under the *Oceans Act*, next steps, and also to discuss an Inuit Protected and Conserved Area (IPCA) Qikiqtait Nunangit. The Working Group sought community feedback and support on the Qikiqtait Marine Protected Area (MPA) proposal. An overarching goal for the Working Group was to hear what the community of Sanikiluaq thinks about Qikiqtait MPA proposal, and learn of the community's experiences in and uses of the area.

The purpose of this report is to summarize the feedback provided by community members who attended the meetings, to provide transparency in the process, and to provide a record of the discussions and concerns shared by the community. To confirm accuracy of the information captured, this report was shared with the Sanikiluaq Qikiqtait Steering Committee, Sanikiluaq Hunters and Trappers Association and the Hamlet Council for review. After the Sanikiluaq Qikiqtait Steering Committee have had an opportunity to comment, these reports will be shared more broadly.

Summary of meetings

On November 7, 2023, members of the Sanikiluaq Qikiqtait Steering Committee hosted Working Group members in the Qikiqtait Centre board room and provided updates on community priorities and community-led initiatives. This information was complementary to the focused conversations around marine and terrestrial protection for Qikiqtait. On November 8 2023, Working Group members met with the 18 residents of Sanikiluaq from the Hamlet, Hunters and Trappers Association and the Sanikiluaq Qikiqtait Steering Committee to conduct a day-long meeting featuring presentations on the proposed MPA by Ministerial Order, Fisheries Management, Qikiqtait Terrestrial Protection and the Qikiqtani Regional Conservation Model.

Working Group members also met with the Sanikiluaq general public on November 8 2023 between 7:30 PM and 9:00 PM in the multi-purpose hall of Sanikiluaq High School. The meeting featured a presentation on the proposed MPA by Ministerial Order with DFO under the *Oceans Act*. QIA's long-term protection vision for Qikiqtait and how this relates to the community's priorities was also discussed. Simultaneous interpretation was provided by the Chair of Sanikiluaq Hunters and Trappers Organization. A total of 96 adult community members were present for this meeting.

On April 16 2024, the Working Group returned to Sanikiluaq in the Qikiqtait Centre to engage in the second round of consultations, with the first day involving presentations from DFO, ECCC and QIA updating community members on progress to date, sharing the proposed boundaries of the MPA, and distributing surveys to determine from community members what activities are taking place within the proposed MPA boundaries. On April 17 2024, the Working Group reconvened in the Qikiqtait Centre during the morning to continue discussions and questions. At 7:30 PM on April 17, a public meeting was held in the multi-purpose hall of Sanikiluaq High

School with simultaneous interpretation into Inuktitut. The meeting featured similar presentations to what was shared with the Sanikiluaq Qikiqtait Steering Committee, the proposed MPA boundaries were shared with the public, and a question period occurred. A total of 54 adult community members were present. On April 18 2024, a presentation from Fisheries Management occurred, and the topic of emerging fisheries was discussed in relation to the proposed MPA and Sanikiluaq's interests.

What we heard overall

Throughout the consultation processes in both November and April, Sanikiluarmit were very engaged in the meetings – sharing their expertise of the area and their perspectives, voicing concerns, providing advice, and raising important questions. Conversations during these consultations were categorized into five main categories for ease of presenting the results in this report.

The first category involved *general discussions on the Qikiqtait Protected Areas and its process*, and the major topics of conversation included community advice on proper consultation practices and the timing of when materials are provided for review; discussions regarding the conservation objectives; and how local, regional and national politics could affect this proposed MPA by Ministerial Order.

The second category was on *protection, regulations and enforcement*, and included topics such as regulations affecting oil, gas, mining and other pollutants; financial and legal responsibility for enforcement in the MPA; how to protect against regional disturbances such as Quebec Hydro, pollution and the freshening of Hudson Bay; and discussions surrounding the specifics of 'small and enclosed bays' and their removal from the proposed MPA boundaries.

The third category encompassed *commercial fisheries*, and many aspects of Sanikiluaq's position on emerging fisheries and conserving local harvesting practices. Discussion points included questions on the licensing phases; bottom contact fisheries; existing licenses in the region; and how Inuit traditional knowledge should be meaningfully incorporated into fisheries regulations.

The fourth category included topics on *rights under the Nunavut Final Agreement, legal and financial implications*. These included discussions surrounding the Inuit Impact and Benefit Agreement; rights protected under the Nunavut Final Agreement; and how regulations in a MPA vs. an IPCA may impact traditional Inuit rights.

Finally, the fifth category encompassed *Sanikiluaq perspectives and priorities*. This was a broader theme, with many topics included that are important to Sanikiluarmit. Some examples of topics are: Special places near Sanikiluaq and how a MPA by Ministerial Order may impact them; infrastructure interests; concern about rivers not flowing and what could be done to improve them; Crown land versus municipal land ownership; and Inuit cultural values and the dissonance often experienced between federal policies and local perspectives in Sanikiluaq.

Overall there was a general consensus that the Sanikiluaq Qikiqtait Steering Committee wanted to be a part of the discussions and plans for protection not only in the short-term of the Ministerial Order MPA but also for the long-term vision of the region. Their desire for a local commercial fishery was expressed and there were concerns that the community would be unable to pursue the commercial fishery if an MPA was put in place. The Sanikiluaq Qikiqtait Steering Committee also wanted to be a part of planning research and monitoring priorities within any protected area, including drafting a workplan for the time frame of the Ministerial Order MPA. Concern was also expressed that an MPA would be created without the community's explicit support.

Meeting Summaries

Hamlet, Hunters and Trappers Association and Sanikiluaq Qikiqtait Steering Committee Meetings November 7 – 8, 2023

On November 7 and 8 2023, 18 members of the Sanikiluaq Qikiqtait Steering Committee, Hunters and Trappers Association and Hamlet Council met with the Qikiqtait Working Group to share knowledge and discuss aspects of short-term and long-term marine and terrestrial protection of Qikiqtait.



Members of the Hamlet Council, Hunters and Trappers Association and the Sanikiluaq Qikiqtait Steering Committee meeting with Working Group Representatives during November 8, 2023 consultations on Qikiqtait MPA

Summary of November 2023 Presentations

Department of Fisheries and Oceans – Marine Planning and Conservation (Bethany Schroeder)

Fisheries and Oceans Marine Planning and Conservation presented the proposed approach for the Qikiqtait Marine Protected Area to the Sanikiluaq Qikiqtait Steering Committee in Sanikiluaq during November 2023. The presentation began by introducing Qikiqtait, as well as discussing short and long-term protection goals and their associated timelines. A major focal point of this presentation was introducing the MPA's draft Conservation Objectives for discussion.

Department of Fisheries and Oceans – Fisheries Management (Kevin Tallon via a virtual presentation)

The purpose of this presentation was to introduce the DFO's Fisheries Management branch, and how it relates to Sanikiluaq's interest in emerging fisheries, and the fisheries licensing process in its three Stages.

Environment and Climate Change Canada (Lisa Pirie)

Environment and Climate Change Canada presented material relevant to the proposed Qikiqtait Terrestrial Protected Area, demonstrating the importance of the area relating to birds, most notably a non-migratory species of Common Eider, and 6 other species at risk that occur in the area. ECCC presented on Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas from their perspective, and what legislation could be used to govern an IPCA with QIA (*Section 7* agreement under *Canada Wildlife Act*).

Qikiqtani Inuit Association (Rosanne d'Orazio)

Qikiqtani Inuit Association presented on the Qikiqtani Regional Conservation Model, discussing the pillars of the model and how they relate to Sanikiluarmit, the proposed MPA, and a future IPCA. The presentation focused on Inuit stewardship, Indigenous-led governance, infrastructure support and fisheries reconciliation. Programs for monitoring and regional governance such as the Nauttiqsuqtiit Program were also covered.

Sanikiluaq Public Meeting November 8, 2023

Representatives of the Qikiqtait and Sarvarjuaq Working Group met with the community of Sanikiluaq on November 8, 2023 between 7:30 pm and 9:00 pm in the multi-purpose hall of Sanikiluaq High School and discussed the collective knowledge of Qikiqtait and the proposed approach to short-term marine conservation and next steps to advance the designation of Qikiqtait as an MPA Ministerial Order by 2025.

A total of **96 adult** community members were present at this meeting.



Sanikiluaq Public in attendance during November 8, 2023 consultations on Qikiqtait MPA proposal

The meeting featured presentations on:

- Marine Protected Area by Ministerial Order with DFO under the Oceans Act – (DFO – Bethany Schroeder).
- QIA’s long-term vision of protection through an IPCA for Qikiqtait and how this speaks to the community’s priorities
- Interpretation was provided in Inuktitut

Working Group members received responses from Sanikiluaq community members of their interest to participate in the protection of Qikiqtait for future generations. February or March 2024 was communicated by Working Group members as possible return dates for the second community tour to discuss next steps and share proposed regulatory documents and seek community input .

DFO thanked community members for their participation in the meeting and requested feedback on survey for draft Qikiqtait Conservation Objectives.

Hamlet, Hunters and Trappers Association and Sanikiluaq Qikiqtait Steering Committee Meetings April 16 – 18 2024

From April 16 – 18 2024, 19 members of the Sanikiluaq Qikiqtait Steering Committee, Hunters and Trappers Association, and Hamlet Council met with the Qikiqtait Working Group to provide updates from the previous November meetings, present the proposed boundaries for the protected area, learn about the activities taking place in the proposed Qikiqtait study area, and have discussions on multiple aspects of short and long-term protection for Qikiqtait. In response to questions asked regarding the development of an emerging fishery within an MPA boundary, DFO presented important points for consideration.

Summary of April 2024 Presentations

Department of Fisheries and Oceans – Marine Planning and Conservation (Lauren Candlish)

Fisheries and Oceans Marine Planning and Conservation presented updates on the proposed Qikiqtait Marine Protected Area, to the Sanikiluaq Qikiqtait Steering Committee in Sanikiluaq during April 2024. The presentation began with an initial review of background information on Qikiqtait, and discussing short and long-term protection goals, and reviewing the Conservation Objectives. New information presented included the finalized boundaries for the Qikiqtait MPA, and an open discussion of current, ongoing and planned activities taking place within the Qikiqtait MPA boundaries. This discussion was accompanied by the distribution of an activity survey to Sanikiluaq Qikiqtait Steering Committee members.

Environment and Climate Change Canada (Lisa Pirie)

Environment and Climate Change Canada presented updates relevant to the proposed Qikiqtait Terrestrial Protected Area, firstly updating on how ECCC has been involved in Eider duck research to date. ECCC stated they would submit recent data to Arctic Eider Society. In addition, ECCC presented on recent financial support to the Qikiqtait initiative, and pointed out the different designations of land. Finally, ECCC shared information and insights on how terrestrial protection could be put in place.

Qikiqtani Inuit Association (Rosanne d’Orazio and George Qulaut)

The Qikiqtani Inuit Association shared information and updates relevant to the proposed Qikiqtait terrestrial and marine conservation areas. QIA presented on funding and protection in the context of the Inuit Impact and Benefit Agreement, and maps of Qikiqtait Nunangit were discussed in the context of jurisdiction. Different options for how to create an IPCA through existing legislation were presented, and there were conversations on how to create new legislation to ensure adequate Inuit governance of Qikiqtait for the long-term. Finally, the concept of a Qikiqtani Conservation Committee (that would be developed in each of the 13 Qikiqtani communities) was discussed, but is in very early stages.

Department of Fisheries and Oceans – Fisheries Management (Kevin Tallon)

The purpose of this presentation was to introduce everybody to the Marine Conservation Target Program in DFO’s Fisheries Management branch, and how it relates to Sanikiluaq’s interest in emerging fisheries. The fisheries licensing process was shared, with a special focus on the requirements associated with each Stage of the license and how it relates to Sanikiluaq.

Sanikiluaq Public Meeting April 17, 2024

Representatives of the Qikiqtait and Sarvarjuaq Working Group met with the community of Sanikiluaq on April 17, 2024 between 7:30 pm and 9:00 pm in the multi-purpose hall of Sanikiluaq High School. Updates from the first round of consultations were presented, and the proposed boundaries of the Marine Protected Area were shared and discussed. Next steps were shared to outline how the designation of Qikiqtait as an MPA Ministerial Order could occur by 2025.

A total of **54 adult** community members were present at this meeting.



The meeting featured presentations on:

- Marine Protected Area by Ministerial Order with DFO under the Oceans Act (DFO – Lauren Candlish)
- Updates from Environment and Climate Change Canada on the terrestrial components (ECCC – Lisa Pirie)
- Updates from Qikiqtani Inuit Association on the terrestrial IPCA, Qikiqtait Nunangit, the Inuit Impact and Benefit Agreement and long-term protection through an IPCA (QIA – Rosanne D’Orazio and George Qulaut)
- Interpretation was provided in Inuktitut

Questions from the public included comments on the importance of being informed across the community, mismanagement of wildlife in nearby islands, the importance of coming back to communities after sharing information and following up, the desire to be able to charter planes to Sleeper Islands to practice harvesting activities, and how critical it is for people to get out on the land in order for knowledge to continue to get passed across generations.

Community Surveys

November 2023 – Conservation Objectives Survey

During the November 2023 consultations, surveys were handed out to Sanikiluarmit present at the consultations, with 27 respondents in total. The survey consisted of three questions regarding the conservation objectives of the proposed Qikiqtait MPA by Ministerial Order.

For the first question, *'What do you think about this Conservation Objective for Qikiqtait?'*, respondents overall were supportive of the Conservation Objectives, with 18 respondents explicitly expressing support. Some of those respondents stated their support with conditional statements such as 'As long as all the aspects listed are supported', or 'I approve the initiative as long as everything is updated if needed'. Three respondents expressed their desire for a sewing center in Sanikiluaq, and one highlighted the need for a community garage for public use. Four respondents described the importance of the environment and the animals living there, with one expressing concern that a marine environment cannot be guaranteed protection when polluted rivers are flowing in and mixing with it. Finally, two participants had comments, including one saying 'not so fast' and another asking 'how are you getting information and being able to comprehend what the objective for Qikiqtait should be concerning wildlife and weather conditions?'

For the second question, *'Are there other words that could help you connect more to this Conservation Objective?'*, nearly half of the respondents did not have follow-up comments. Five respondents stated that the app SIKU (developed by the residents of Sanikiluaq and the Arctic Eider Society) needs to continue. Four participants requested more outreach to the community, recommending avenues such as the Sanikiluaq Announcements, social media, or creating a website for the MPA. One participant requested that the PowerPoint presentation be more clear, and one participant requested a research kit. Finally, one resident restated the need for a community sewing center, and another cautioned that Qikiqtait has many gravesites.

For the third question, *'Is there anything else you would like to tell us today?'*, roughly half (15) of the respondents did not have further comments, with one saying 'Just do what would make a better future'. One participant asked if this organization would be doing something to the land, and another expressed frustration that the Working Group was interested in their land, stating they would never go south and impose anything on southern lands, and just wanted Qikiqtait to be left alone. Four participants stated that they wanted to keep consuming country food and harvesting. Some comments included: The Government of Nunavut needing a plan to respond to emergencies; that SIKU should get more funding as well as Elders teaching younger generations Inuit culture; that cabins are needed in the Belcher islands for hunters' survival; and that all variables (such as climate change, government, local people) should be kept in mind as this progresses into the future. Finally, one participant asked that if that animals were sick, was it because of water contaminated with garbage?

April 2024 – Activity Survey

During the April 2024 consultations, surveys were handed out to Sanikiluarmit present at the consultations, with 16 respondents in total. The survey consisted of 11 questions about local use of the Qikiqtait area. The purpose of the survey was to document the current and ongoing local activities being undertaken within the proposed boundaries of the MPA so that they may be included in the regulation and allowed to continue. Any activities falling under the description of Inuit harvesting rights in the Nunavut Settlement Area would not be subject to any restrictions and can continue unaffected by the MPA.

10 of the respondents answered that they were beneficiaries of the *Nunavut Agreement*, one said they were not, and five responses were left blank. 14 participants said they brought tourists to the Qikiqtait Study Area for guiding, outfitting, sport hunting or other types of tourism. 13 people said they harvested plants along the shoreline to sell and 12 people said they harvested Eider duck down to sell. When asked if they fished in the Qikiqtait Study Area for the purpose of selling their catch, 12 people said yes. When asked about traditional harvesting and travel activities such as fishing for food, hunting for country food, using the water and sea ice for methods of transportation, camping and whale/bird watching, 15 people said 'yes' to each question. Other activities identified by community members in written form included: Water monitoring, water samples, salinity studies, contaminant research, film-making, education / outreach, recreation, benthic invertebrate bottom contact harvesting, timelapses for oceanographic, weather and environmental purposes, and monitoring.

It is important to note that during the April 2024 consultations, it was expressed that the surveys should be worded differently (especially in Inuktitut – the translations did not capture the intent of the survey). It was also recommended that the surveys be shared to a select group prior to distribution so that they may be fine-tuned to be culturally relevant.

What We Heard

General discussion on the Qikiqtait Marine Protected Area and the process

November Meeting

- Question regarding timeline of Ministerial Order – is it guaranteed by 2025?
 - Response: Partners are working towards it, but recognize many steps must be completed first
- Question regarding upcoming federal election and how that may affect creation of MPA
 - Response: Commitments to Inuit within signed Inuit Impact and Benefit Agreements and Project Finance for Permanence will be upheld by the Government of Canada if they are finalized and implemented prior to the upcoming federal election. If these agreements are not finalized before the election, the elected government may choose not to advance these agreements and commitments promised may not be honoured by the new government. Similarly, if the Qikiqtait and Sarvarjuaq study areas have not been designated by Ministerial Order regulations prior to the election, the elected government may choose not to pursue conservation measures for these areas.
- Question if Conservation Objectives applied to Terrestrial Areas
 - Response: they only apply to Marine Areas in MPA
- Committee members want the inclusion of “future generations” in Conservation Objectives.
 - Response: DFO committed to look for additional feedback about how they can incorporate continuity between generations in the Conservation Objectives.
- Comment from the Hunters and Trappers Association Chair that the draft Conservation Objectives were consistent with the priorities of the Sanikiluaq Qikiqtait Steering Committee and reflected community vision.
- Committee members’ showed support for marine conservation in Qikiqtait.
- Committee members’ showed strong support for terrestrial protection through agreement with Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) for an IPCA.

April Meeting

- Comment on how public needs to be consulted properly in order for information to be shared in timely manner
- Comment on how presentations need to be shared well in advance of meetings in order to give the Sanikiluaq Qikiqtait Steering Committee ample time to understand and put together questions
- Comment on how discussions about new committees and organizational structures regarding MPA (Qikiqtani Conservation Committee for ex.) are maybe not needed because Sanikiluaq has several committees in place already that are functioning decision-making bodies. Why not use existing structures that community has put in place?
 - Response from QIA: There can be overlap between existing committees and new ones

Protection, regulations and enforcement

November Meeting

- Question regarding contaminants coming from rivers into Hudson Bay and James Bay – will federal government help protect the rivers and the contaminants in them?
 - Response from ECCC: It is hard to stop pollution coming from outside

- Response from QIA: Through Environmental Impact Assessments – could be negotiated into an Inuit Impact and Benefit Agreement.

April Meeting

- Question from the Government of Nunavut: Once IPCA is in place, could there be a provision where QIA could allow oil, gas or mining?
 - Response from QIA: Goal is conservation economy, diversifying economy through different means. Economic opportunities could come from conservation or development.
- Question from the Arctic Eider Society: Who would be financially responsible for legal fees if enforcement was needed for those in violation of protection regulations?
 - Good point, need discussion at table with federal government – have not talked about financial responsibility towards things such as oil spills. Difference between marine and terrestrial designation, and enforcement attached to both types.
 - Follow-up question from the Arctic Eider Society: If enforcement rules were adopted under QIA as a bylaw, would they have to be enforced by QIA?
 - QIA answer: Yes
 - *Updated Response: Federal regulations and jurisdictions would still apply.*
- Question on which tools can be used to protect, and how will responses to disasters such as oil spills be carried out in the context of a MPA? And how can marine life be guaranteed safe to eat in the case of pollution?
 - Response: Lots of work going on between DFO and Coast Guard for emergency response for oil spills, this was also brought up at Hudson Bay Consortium. Regarding food security and safety for consumption, we will seek more information on that.
- Question on how to protect against freshening of Hudson Bay water – it is much less salty than it used to be
 - Response from DFO: Lots of research being done on this – it is of concern to many and they are trying to monitor it.
 - Response from QIA: Monitoring and research from Nauttiqsuqtiit shows baseline data, an IPCA could create a governance structure that could intervene in projects within Nunavut waters.
- Question about hydro projects in Quebec and if this MPA would protect against projects in other jurisdictions
 - Response from DFO: This MPA would not be able to protect against things happening in other regions.
- Discussion on how ‘small and enclosed bays’ have been removed from the proposed MPA due to the devolution agreement between the Government of Canada and Government of Nunavut, with questions arising during conversations in the meetings, but the boundaries could be revisited as part of the planning for long-term protection.
 - Comments on how more clarity was needed in understanding what defined a ‘small and enclosed bay’, more simple language was requested
- Comment on how they should be able to amend protection during 5 years if the environment changes within the 5-year time period (such as sea ice, animal populations, erosion, etc).

Commercial fisheries

November Meeting

- Sanikiluaq community interest in commercial fisheries (e.g., benthic species) in Qikiqtait and beyond
- Question regarding commercial fisheries and economic opportunities in Marine and Terrestrial areas – can they occur?
 - Response: Currently there are no blanket prohibition of commercial fisheries in the proposed Qikiqtait MPA. As long as active licenses for future commercial fisheries activity are in place before 2025 designation of MPA by Ministerial Order (for up to 5 years) these would be considered on-going. IPCA's goal (for long-term) is to create balance between economic opportunities and protection.
 - **Update from response provided in November:** *if there are licenses and authorizations in place prior to designations, these will be listed as on-going activities.*
- Question regarding benthic species in Qikiqtait and if other jurisdictions would have commercial fisheries
 - Response: Not discussed as of yet, good question
- Question on how bottom contact fisheries could both exist and be in an MPA
 - Bottom contact fishing is a restricted activity so it would need to be considered ongoing when MPA by Ministerial Order is designated. (Note that bottom contact fishing can only be ongoing during the Ministerial Order period)
 - **Update from response provided in November:** *In long-term MPAs by Governor in Council regulations there are protection standards where bottom contact fishing is a restricted activity. In a Ministerial Order MPA (for up to five years) the protection standard does not apply but bottom contact fishing would need to be listed as an ongoing activity or in a class of ongoing activities. Further discussions will occur during the fall 2024 fisheries workshop in Sanikiluaq to discuss some of these questions. We will also ensure communications will continue on any developments in regards to fishing authorizations.*
- Question on stage of fisheries license – Feasibility Stage now, how to go to Stage 2?
 - If activity were inconsistent with Conservation Objective, would need to undergo risk assessment. Discussions needed between Fisheries Management and other partners to determine what kind of license would be applicable, how to go from exploratory to commercial phase, and long-term vision under IPCA.
 - **Update from response provided in November:** *DFO believes the appropriate regulation to authorize the licenses for both Stage 1 and 2 of the New and Emerging Fisheries Policy for the community of Sanikiluaq, is by using the Aboriginal Communal Fishing Licenses Regulations. As the license type will not change if movement between stages is necessary during the five-year period of a Ministerial Order MPA, the question around license types and whether they are the same ongoing activity will be remedied.*

April Meeting

- Question if researchers need letter of support from community when requesting Article 52 Research License?
 - Response: Yes a support letter is required, researchers are also supposed to report back on work, although it is not a requirement.
- Question regarding licenses issued recently – research licenses issued over last 5 years, science licenses issued for scallop and sea cucumber fisheries in 2023/2024. What is difference between research and science licenses, and can they continue under an MPA? And where are they in the stages of licensing?
 - Licenses have been issued for Sanikiluaq but only for science, community is not in an emerging fishery stage. Existing licenses could inform a fishery. Need to work together to ensure progress

- need scientific knowledge to support a fishery, and if you have enough, it is possible to go to Stage 2 and skip Stage 1. Need to have more conversations and get more answers on how.
- Question regarding concern about catch-and-release for fishing licenses and if it is prohibited; not in agreement with catch and release
 - Response: Not sure what each license and subsequent research require, but likely the bycatch is released unless it is sampled for some reason.
- Question regarding Qipaluk Inlet (skinny, long inlet excluded from MPA in maps as it is a small and enclosed bay) in reference to scallops and sea cucumber potential fishery; it wouldn't be in protected waters and that is a concern
 - Response: This can be discussed as part of the long-term vision of Qikiqtait.
- Comment from Elder on how they would like more Inuit traditional knowledge integrated into decision-making and harvesting regulations to provide a more complete picture of animal populations and ecosystem dynamics
 - Response: Wants to be part of a discussion on how to do that in a good way, that ensures ownership stays with community and that the shared information is used in context

Rights under Nunavut Agreement, legal and financial implications

November Meeting

- Discussions regarding protected rights secured under the Nunavut Agreement, including traditional harvesting rights
- Discussions regarding Inuit Impact and Benefits Agreement negotiations status
- Question if enforcement will be in place once MPA is designated
 - Response: Interesting topic to discuss regarding options available for enforcement, based on community desire and jurisdictional ability.

April Meeting

- Question on if traditional harvesting has bottom contact, will it be allowed?
 - Response: Yes, traditional harvesting will be allowed within the MPA
 - Follow-up question: Will traditional harvesting be defined? Indigenous people have been fighting for what is traditional harvesting vs what is not, but sometimes these definitions aren't clear
 - Follow-up response: Rights under the *Nunavut Agreement* will be protected according to their definition in the Agreement.

Sanikiluaq perspectives and priorities

November Meeting

- Question regarding special places and impacts to these places – what activities can continue in 5 years of protection?
 - Response: Any activities that are occurring from one year prior to designation will continue
- Discussion on work and priorities being advanced by the community of Sanikiluaq
- Discussions on connections with Cree and Nunavik communities, and the greater Hudson's Bay ecosystem

- Agreement from the Sanikiluaq Qikiqtait Steering Committee members that the boundary in the 2022 QIA Prospectus “A regional conservation approach” is consistent with the boundary the community would like to protect in Qikiqtait.
- Through discussions, comments and the survey responses community members indicated interest in the following infrastructure and support:
 - Multi-use facility
 - Small engine repair shop/public garage
 - Bridge, roads and cabins around community
 - Community freezer and processing plant with funding for operations
 - Two flights schedule to and from Iqaluit per week
 - Sewing centre
 - Support for SIKU

April Meeting

- Comment on how qualitative concepts such as money, data and measurements are difficult to align with Inuit cultural values on conservation, which is based more on feeling, experience, and spirituality. A balance between the two worldviews needs to be found moving forward.
- Comment on how DFO doesn’t understand Inuit values and has demonstrated through past and present actions that they are still unable to understand. There is not enough recognition placed on Inuit expertise and knowledge, there is too much control and regulation based on Southern values.
 - Response: Hoping for progress in the right direction, acknowledging that there is a long way to go, but steps are being taken in trying to employ more Northern locals in decision-making roles.
 - Follow-up question to previous comment: Will DFO be able to truly work with Inuit?
 - Response: Yes, it is a primary focus to work with Inuit, and working towards a fully functional region in the Arctic. Although we are currently working with Federal tools, the goal is to make them Inuit-led.
- A big picture question on ‘are things getting worse’ regarding freshening of Hudson Bay, want more clarity and communication from researchers on this
 - Response from Arctic Eider Society: Yes it is getting worse but not sure how much worse
- Interest in using the SIKU app to inform the MPA’s design and implementation

Terrestrial Protection through an Inuit Protected and Conserved Area

Terrestrial protection is a QIA led process with support from ECCC. During consultations there were presentations and discussions on the terrestrial process. However this report is focusing on the marine process through DFO under the *Oceans Act*.

November Meeting

- Committee members’ showed strong support for terrestrial protection as an Inuit Protected and Conserved Area (IPCA)-
- Question if Sanikiluarmitut have to cede more rights in order to establish an IPCA?
 - Response from QIA: QIA has only expressed interest in an IPCA. There will be no ceding of right by Inuit in order to establish an IPCA.

April Meeting

- Question on if soapstone mining and gravel quarries will continue to be allowed?
 - Response from QIA: Soapstone mining is protected under the Nunavut Agreement, so yes. Gravel quarries, if ongoing, yes, but roads to access mines would need to be taken into account – would need to be discussed with management committee – but don't want to limit anybody in Sanikiluaq.
- Interest in transferring certain portions of Crown Land to municipal ownership, so access roads may be created by the Hamlet of Sanikiluaq
- Interest in diverting some rivers that no longer flow so they may flow again – community can do it, they have the means – they just need permission. Do they have the permission?
 - Response: If this happens on Inuit-owned land, it's a conversation between Inuit and QIA, but if the river is fish-bearing, other departments (such as DFO) would have to get involved. Recognize that this has discussion been ongoing for a while and follow-up answers are needed for permissions.

Other Points of Discussion

There were several questions and topics that were outside the scope of the protected areas conversations, and topics that will require additional conversations.

Topics that can be discussed during long-term planning for the area include:

- An area called Qipaluk Inlet (a long, skinny inlet), the 'small and enclosed bays' adjustment to the MPA now excludes this area from protection. Community members stated that as a concern and are wondering what the implications would be for sea cucumber populations there – potential fishery could be there but if it is in an unprotected area that is concerning.
- A follow-up discussion on how to include local and traditional knowledge into the regulations in a culturally appropriate way was requested.

Topics that were outside the scope of a Marine Protected Area:

- Further information was requested on how marine life in the region can be guaranteed to be safe for consumption, even with existing and potential pollutants.
- Regarding how some rivers no longer flow to the ocean, and how Sanikiluaq community members are requesting to take matters into their own hands to increase river flow (by dredging, for example), it was recognized this has been a question from the community for a while and the Government of Canada needed to provide more information on the permissions, especially if rivers are fish-bearing.
- More clarity from researchers was requested on the status of the freshening of Hudson Bay and how much worse it may be getting.

Next Steps

The next steps to pursue establishment of a new Ministerial Order MPA will be to seek stakeholder input on the proposal, seek formal community support, complete assessments and approvals needed under the Nunavut Agreement such as conformity determination by the Nunavut Planning Commission and Nunavut Wildlife Management Board approval, and complete DFO's regulatory process. Formal letters of support will be sought from community hamlets and Hunter and Trapper Associations. Community members are encouraged to communicate their feedback on the proposal to these organizations to inform their decision. DFO will notify communities and stakeholders prior to the proposal being published online in the Canada Gazette for a 30-day public comment period, additional input can be provided at that time as well.

It is important to us that we have summarized your input on this report correctly. If you feel that we have missed any input provided during our meetings or captured information incorrectly, please reach out to DFO.ArcticMPC-ArctiquePCM.MPO@dfo-mpo.gc.ca for any required corrections.

The Qikiqtait and Sarvarjuaq Working Group would like to thank all of the community members who attended these meetings - your feedback is vital and appreciated.

Thank you!

Appendix 1. Regulatory Intent for the Proposed Qikiqtait MPA

Regulatory Intent for the Proposed Qikiqtait Marine Protected Area by Ministerial Order

I. Background and Significance

The Belcher Islands Ecologically and Biologically Significant Area (EBSA) was identified in 2011 as part of a larger evaluation conducted by DFO to identify EBSAs throughout Canada's Arctic (DFO 2011). In 2019, Sanikiluaq considered developing Qikiqtait as a blend of Marine Protected Areas (MPA) and National Wildlife Areas (NWA) to protect both the marine and terrestrial areas. In February 2023, Qikiqtait was identified as a marine area under consideration for conservation by the Government of Canada.

Ecological Significance

Qikiqtait and the Belcher Islands are a distinctive geographic and oceanographic region in southeast of Hudson Bay. The archipelago covers a total area of approximately 13,000 square kilometers. The Belcher Islands have recurring, biologically important polynyas. The area is ecologically significant due to several factors:

- **Biodiversity:** High benthic diversity, including sea urchins, sea cucumbers, and bivalves are found in this area. Many higher trophic level species (e.g., Beluga, Walrus, Common Eider, Polar Bear, Seals) found within this area. Local marine life also includes. Lemmings, foxes and Arctic hare are found on land. The coast near Sanikiluaq is also home to Arctic char, capelin, cod, lumpfish, scallops, sea urchin, sea cucumber and sculpin (Gilchrist and Robertson, 2000).
- **Primary Production:** Qikiqtait plays a critical role in ecosystem function whereby strong vertical mixing as a result of cold summer sea-surface temperatures sustains high primary productivity (Galbraith and Larouche, 2011).
- **Migration and Breeding Grounds:** The Belcher Islands act as an winter habitat for beluga and walrus, important feeding grounds for polar bear, and support large populations of eider ducks. As well, the area supports high benthic diversity (DFO, 2011).
- **Climate Regulation:** The multiple reoccurring polynyas throughout Qikiqtait influence the exchange of heat, gases, and freshwater between the ocean and atmosphere, thereby playing a role in local and regional climate dynamics. It helps regulate the formation of sea ice and influences ocean circulation patterns (DFO, 2011).
- **Traditional Knowledge:** The people of Sanikiluaq call themselves Sanikiluarmit, meaning "people of the islands" (Qikiqtani Inuit Association, 2014). The earliest human habitation of the Belcher Islands dates to 700-500 BC (Maxell 1985). Subsistence harvesting for sea cucumber, scallops and sea urchin is done by community members in shallow waters close to communities, through the use of pull nets. Residents from Sanikiluaq also harvest beluga whale and walrus (WWF, 2021). Sanikiluarmit collect grasses along the shoreline and use the plant to make baskets (Lawrence, 2018).

Overall, the Qikiqtait area serves as a unique and vital ecosystem, supporting diverse marine life and is culturally important to Sanikiluaq.

Proposed Approach

Establishment of a Ministerial Order Marine Protected Area (MPA) under the *Oceans Act* has been proposed for Qikiqtait as an interim protection measure and a first step to establish long-term marine protection in Qikiqtait. While interim protection is in place, the Government of Canada will explore the options for a long-term conservation measures in the area with the Qikiqtani Inuit Association (QIA) and the Government of Nunavut, through analysis and further consultation. The consideration of long-term conservation measures will include an Inuit Protected and Conserved Area (IPCA).

The Ministerial Order MPA will allow the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard to freeze the footprint of ongoing activities in the area for up to five years. This will mean that no new activities will be allowed in the area following designation. Any activities that have occurred, or were authorized to occur, in the proposed Qikiqtait MPA during the 12 months prior to designation would be considered ongoing activities and would be allowed to continue in the proposed MPA.

II. Proposed Objectives for Qikiqtait

Conservation objectives are broad statements that describe what species or features in the protected area should be conserved. For an MPA under the *Oceans Act* conservation objectives need to refer to protecting or conserving marine species, unique habitats, high biodiversity, and/or the ecosystem. These objectives guide the interim nature of this work and long-term objectives will be developed, in the future.

The following objectives have been proposed for Qikiqtait. The second statement reflects our commitments to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act Action Plan and the recommendations from the Qikiqtani Truth Commission.

- (1) To support the conservation, protection, and understanding of the marine environment around the Belcher Islands, including the wildlife and other species, that is of immense value to Inuit and Inuit culture.
- (2) To support Inuit leadership in the conservation of Qikiqtait to ensure the continuity of Inuit culture, values, and practices, including accumulating and passing down Inuit knowledge as well as Inuit stewardship and governance.

III. Map and Boundaries

The proposed boundaries for Qikiqtait were put forward by QIA. These boundaries are shown in Figure 1. If established, the boundaries will follow the Nunavut Settlement Area surrounding the Belcher Islands excluding the north-eastern portion where the Nunavik Settlement Area overlaps. The boundaries exclude Small Enclosed Bays as described in Chapter 1, Definitions and Interpretation of the Nunavut Lands and Resources Devolution Agreement signed January 18, 2024 between the Government of Canada and the Government of Nunavut and Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated.

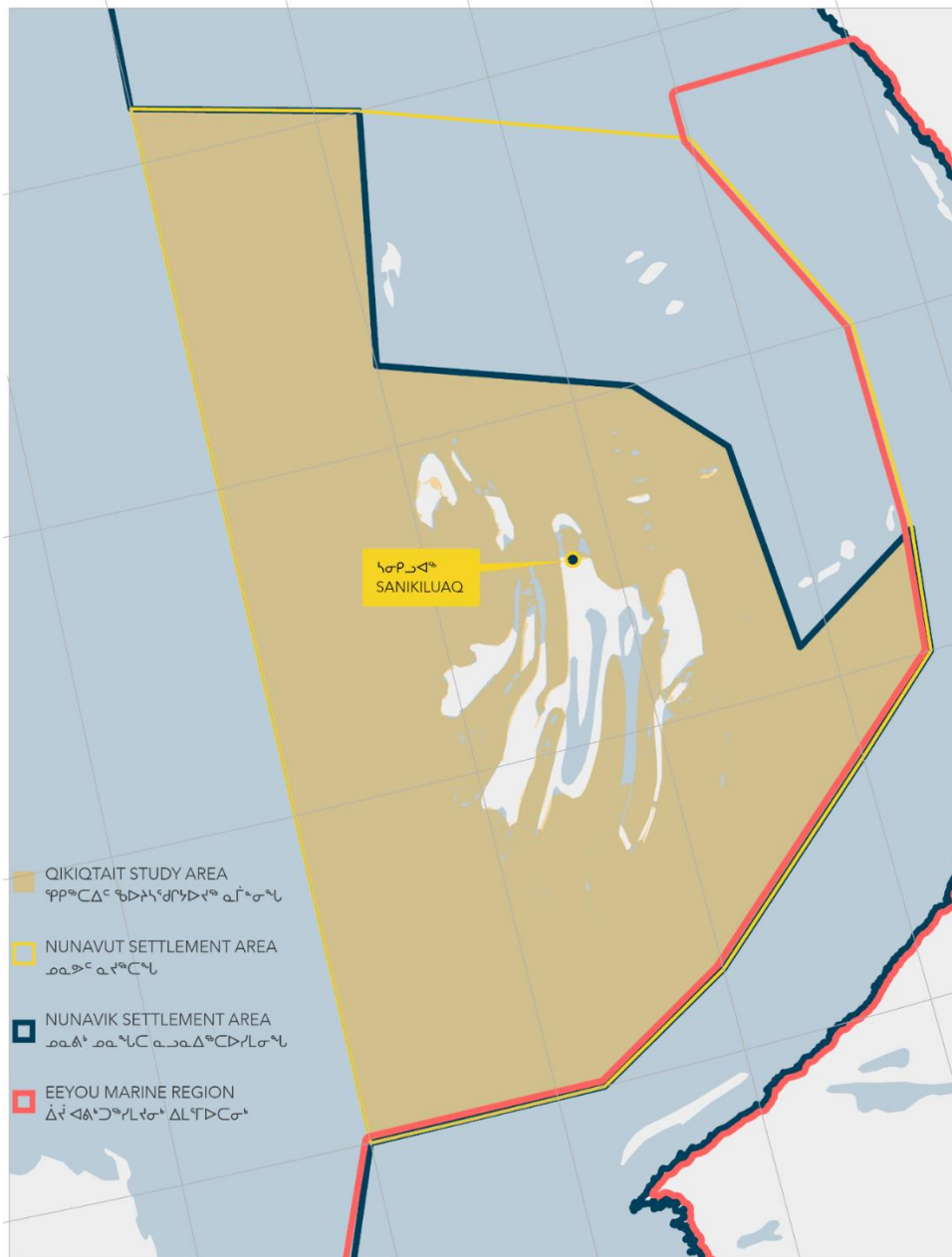


Figure 1. A map showing the boundaries of the proposed Qikiqtait MPA.

IV. Prohibitions and Allowed Activities

It is prohibited in the MPA to carry out any activity that disturbs, damages, destroys or removes from the MPA any unique geological or archeological features or any living marine organism or any part of its habitat, or is likely to do so.

However some activities would be allowed to occur. Activities listed below would be able to occur if Qikiqtait were to become an MPA by Ministerial Order:

- All rights provided for under the *Nunavut Agreement* are respected within the boundary of the Nunavut Settlement Area
- All ongoing activities (see list below) taking place one year prior to designation or activities that have otherwise been authorized to occur by applicable federal laws or by laws of a province/territory
- Research activities consistent with the conservation objectives of the MPA
- Safety, security and emergency activities

Under the *Oceans Act*, DFO would implement an MPA by Ministerial Order by prohibiting any other activities from occurring during the period of the Order, up to five years.

V. List of Ongoing Activities

Ongoing activities can continue to occur if Qikiqtait becomes an MPA by Ministerial Order under the *Oceans Act*. The definition of an ongoing activity is any activity that has taken place one year prior to designation, or activities that have otherwise been authorized to occur by applicable federal laws or by laws of a province/territory.

Activities occurring within the proposed Qikiqtait MPA boundaries have been categorized into classes of ongoing activities which will be allowed in the MPA:

- Hunting and trapping activities
- Fishing activities
- Harvesting of marine plants
- Marine navigation activities
- National defence activities carried out by the Department of National Defence
- Canadian Coast Guard activities carried out by the Canadian Coast Guard
- Tourism activities
- Recreational activities
- Educational activities
- Travel over sea ice using motorized vehicles and non-motorized methods
- Traditional Knowledge and cultural research activities
- Scientific research activities
- Filming activities
- Activities provided for and carried out in a manner not inconsistent with the Nunavut Agreement

Please let us know if you are aware of another ongoing activity that is not captured in the list above.

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Appendix 2. Documented Activities Occurring in the Proposed Qikiqtait MPA

Activities We Heard From Communities and Stakeholders in the Proposed Qikiqtait MPA

Ongoing activities can continue to occur if Qikiqtait becomes an MPA by Ministerial Order under the *Oceans Act*. The definition of an ongoing activity is any activity that has taken place one year prior to designation, or activities that have otherwise been authorized to occur by applicable federal laws or by laws of a province/territory.

Activities documented as occurring within the proposed Qikiqtait MPA boundaries have been categorized and are listed below with some examples. These were informed through community consultations and stakeholder and industry engagement.

Hunting and Trapping Activities

- Hunting occurs for subsistence, traditional, and commercial use of marine mammals and bird species. Hunting also occurs by non-Inuit who live near Qikiqtait. Some examples of hunting includes:
 - Eider ducks are harvested for a food resource and the skin and feathers are used as material for clothing;
 - Beluga whales are hunted around the Lukisee Islands in the spring;
 - Seals are hunted in a bay near Flaherty Island;
 - A wide array of birds are hunted, with two known hunting spots being the Sleeper Islands and the large bay in Middle Island.
- Hunting also occurs for tourism, recreation and sport hunting. This includes guided expeditions of non-Inuit hunters.
- Hunting is also a part of research, monitoring and stewardship programs. Examples include:
 - Arctic Eider Society offers honoraria to hunters to document details of their harvest on SIKU
 - The Nauttiqsuqtiit program shares their harvests with Elders and the community to help Inuit access country food.

Fishing Activities

- Fishing occurs for subsistence, traditional and commercial use for fish and invertebrate species. It also occurs by non-Inuit who live near Qikiqtait.
- Fishing occurs for tourism and recreational use as well as sport fishing or guided expeditions of non-Inuit fishers.
- Fishing is done for scientific research which includes:
 - research to determine commercial fisheries potential.
- The Sanikiluaq Hunters and Trappers Association is currently undertaking the application process for a Stage I Feasibility license under the New and Emerging Fisheries Policy, aimed at pursuing a commercial fishery in the Belcher Islands area.

Marine Plant Harvesting

- Harvesting occurs for marine plant species for commercial purposes, traditional and subsistence use. An example includes:
 - Sea grass basket making.

Marine Navigation Activities

- There is local vessel traffic for subsistence, traditional and/or community use, this includes:
 - Boats and small motorized vessels;
 - Canoeing/qajaq or other non-motorized vessels.
- There is vessel traffic and associated activities for tourism and recreational use such as:
 - Outfitting;
 - Guided or self-guided sight-seeing expeditions;
 - Wildlife viewing;
- There is vessel traffic for commercial use such as:
 - Sealift/goods transportation.
- There is vessel traffic for research or monitoring, including but not limited to vessels such as:
 - CCGS Amundsen;
 - RV William Kennedy;
 - RV Ludy Pudluk.
- There is also vessel traffic for National Defense, and Canadian Coast Guard activities.

Safety, Security, and Emergency Activities

- Safety, security, and emergency activities occur in the area for public safety, national defense, national security, or law enforcement. This includes but is not limited to:
 - Emergency search and rescue;
 - Response to shipping or aircraft accidents;
 - National security requirements;
 - Activities carried out by the Department of National Defence;
 - Activities carried out by the Canadian Coast Guard.

Travel Over Sea Ice

- Inuit and non-Inuit use the sea ice as a method of travel in the proposed Qikiqtait MPA, this includes:
 - Travel routes for hunting by snowmobile and motorized vehicles, including snowmobiles towing boats to floe edges to facilitate the hunts;
 - Non-motorized methods of travel such as dog-sledding, walking, snowshoeing, skiing etc.;
 - Travel routes to visit nearby communities/Islands such as Baker Dozens Islands, Salikuit Islands, Camsell Island, Kugong Island, Sleeper Islands etc.

Tourism and Recreational Activities

- Inuit and non-Inuit use the area for tourism and recreational activities, examples include:
 - Arts and culture;
 - Wildlife viewing;
 - Birdwatching;
 - Eco-tourism;
 - Dog-sledding;
 - Sport hunting;

- Sport fishing;
- Camping on sea ice or traveling to camp sites or cabins;
- Other outfitting or guided excursions.

Educational Activities

- Educational activities occur in the marine environment and over sea ice, such as outreach programs or experience based learning programs.

Research and Monitoring Activities

- Research and monitoring programs occur in the Qikiqtait area, both in the marine and environment form research vessels or smaller vessels as well as sea ice based research programs. Types of research includes:
 - Community-led monitoring programs such as those supported by the Arctic Eider Society;
 - Academic research projects and programs supported by universities, colleges, etc.
 - Surveys to inform fiber optic cables;
- Traditional knowledge research
 - Community-led monitoring programs for the entire Belcher Islands.

Filming Activities

- Other activities documented to have occurred within the Qikiqtait area include filming and media content development. Examples include:
 - Documentary film making;
 - Google street view filming near Sanikiluaq and over sea ice travel routes;
 - Social media or social networking filming.



Fisheries and Oceans
Canada

Pêches et Océans
Canada

Letters of Support for the Proposed Qikiqtait Marine Protected Area

Table of Contents

Government of Nunavut Support Letter.....2

Sanikiluaq Hunters and Trappers Support Letter.....4

Sanikiluaq Hamlet Support Letter5

Arctic Eider Society Support Letter7

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Sanikiluaq Hunters and Trappers
September 25, 2024 , 2024



Sanikiluaq Hunters & Trappers Association
P.O. Box 174
Sanikiluaq, NU X0A 0W0
☎ 867-266-8709 📠 867-266-8131
✉ sani@baffinhto.ca

October 15, 2024

To: C. Thomas Hoggarth
Executive Director, Marine Conservation
Arctic Region
Fisheries and Oceans Canada

Richard Paton
Assistant Executive Director
Marine & Wildlife Conservation
Qikiqtani Inuit Association

RE: Designation of a new Ministerial Order Marine Protected Area in Qikiqtait

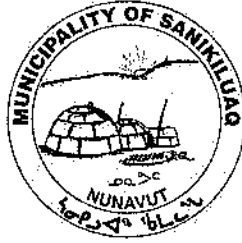
I am writing to express support from the Sanikiluaq Hunters and Trappers for the establishment of a Ministerial Order Marine Protected Area (MPA) in Qikiqtait. It is our understanding that a Ministerial Order MPA, will freeze the footprint of ongoing activities in the area for up to five years. This time will allow the community and Sanikiluaq Qikiqtait Steering Committee to work with the Qikiqtani Inuit Association (QIA), Government of Canada, and Government of Nunavut to explore an Inuit Protected and Conserved Area for the marine environment.

We acknowledge that the following classes of documented activities will be allowed in the MPA:

- Hunting and trapping activities
- Fishing activities
- Harvesting of marine plants
- Marine navigation activities
- National defence activities carried out by the Department of National Defence
- Canadian Coast Guard activities carried out by the Canadian Coast Guard
- Tourism activities
- Recreational activities
- Educational activities
- Travel over sea ice using motorized vehicles and non-motorized methods
- Traditional Knowledge and cultural research activities
- Scientific research activities
- Filming activities
- Activities provided for and carried out in a manner not inconsistent with the Nunavut Agreement

Our community will continue to play a leading role in the process through the Sanikiluaq Qikiqtait Steering Committee as to whether the area should be protected over the long term, on the boundary of the area being considered for protection, and type of protection recommended.

We look forward to working with you to advance the consideration of long-term protection in Qikiqtait following the establishment of the Ministerial Order MPA.



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Municipality of Sanikiluaq
Sanikiluaq, Nunavut, Canada. X0A 0W0
Tel: (867) 266-8307

October 31, 2024

To: C. Thomas Hoggarth
Executive Director, Marine Conservation
Arctic Region
Fisheries and Oceans Canada

Richard Paton
Assistant Executive Director
Marine & Wildlife Conservation
Qikiqtani Inuit Association

RE: Designation of a new Ministerial Order Marine Protected Area in Qikiqtait

I am writing to express support from the Sanikiluaq Hamlet Council for the establishment of a Ministerial Order Marine Protected Area (MPA) in Qikiqtait. It is our understanding that a Ministerial Order MPA, will freeze the footprint of ongoing activities in the area for up to five years. This time will allow the Qikiqtani Inuit Association (QIA), Government of Canada, and Government of Nunavut to explore an Inuit Protected and Conserved Area for the marine environment.

We acknowledge that the following classes of documented activities will be allowed in the MPA:

- Hunting and Trapping activities
- Fishing activities
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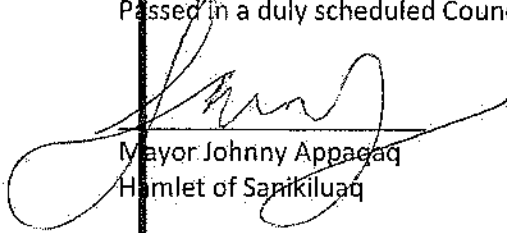
- Travel over sea ice using motorized vehicles and non-motorized methods
- Traditional Knowledge and cultural research activities
- Scientific research activities
- Filming activities
- Activities provided for and carried out in a manner not inconsistent with the Nunavut Agreement

Our community will continue to be engaged during the process as to whether the area should be protected over the long term, on the boundary of the area being considered for protection, and type of protection recommended.

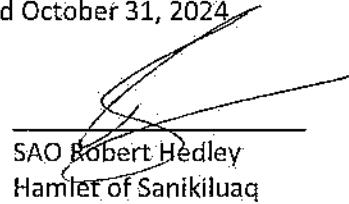
We look forward to working with you to advance the consideration of long-term protection in Qikiqtait following the establishment of the Ministerial Order MPA.

Sincerely;

Passed in a duly scheduled Council Meeting held October 31, 2024.



Mayor Johnny Appaqaq
Hamlet of Sanikiluaq



SAO Robert Hedley
Hamlet of Sanikiluaq



ARCTIC EIDER SOCIETY ᐃᓃᐃᑦ ᐅᑎᑦᑦᑦᑦ
Building 410, No. 234
Sanikiluaq, NU, X0A 0W0, Canada
☎ 613-416-9607 📠 613-701-0326
🌐 www.arcticeider.com ✉ info@arcticeider.com

October 14, 2024

To: C. Thomas Hoggarth
Executive Director, Marine Conservation
Arctic Region
Fisheries and Oceans Canada

Richard Paton
Assistant Executive Director
Marine & Wildlife Conservation
Qikiqtani Inuit Association

RE: Designation of a new Ministerial Order Marine Protected Area in Qikiqtait

I am writing to express support from the Arctic Eider Society for the establishment of a Ministerial Order Marine Protected Area (MPA) in Qikiqtait. It is our understanding that a Ministerial Order MPA, will freeze the footprint of ongoing activities in the area for up to five years. This time will allow the community of Sanikiluaq and Sanikiluaq Qikiqtait Steering Committee to work with the Qikiqtani Inuit Association (QIA), Government of Canada, and Government of Nunavut to explore an Inuit Protected and Conserved Area for the marine environment.

We acknowledge that the following classes of documented activities will be allowed in the MPA:

- Hunting and trapping activities
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- Travel over sea ice using motorized vehicles and non-motorized methods
- Traditional Knowledge and cultural research activities
- Scientific research activities
- Filming activities
- Activities provided for and carried out in a manner not inconsistent with the Nunavut Agreement

We understand that the community will continue to play a leading role in the process as to whether the area should be protected over the long term, on the boundary of the area being considered for protection, and type of protection recommended.

We look forward to working with you to advance the consideration of long-term protection in Qikiqtait following the establishment of the Ministerial Order MPA.

Sincerely,

Joel Heath, Executive Director

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