

Response Statement for Beluga Whale, Eastern High Arctic – Baffin Bay population

October 22, 2004

Common Name: Beluga Whale, Eastern High Arctic – Baffin Bay population

Scientific Name: *Delphinapterus leucas*

Status assessment by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC): Special Concern

Reason(s) for status designation provided by COSEWIC: The population overwinters in Baffin Bay and west Greenland and may consist of two distinct populations. It is heavily hunted in west Greenland. However, most of the population winters in Baffin Bay and the high Arctic where it is not hunted. Hunting pressure in Canadian waters is low in summer.

Occurrence: Nunavut, Arctic Ocean

Competent Minister(s):

Minister of Fisheries and Oceans

Minister of the Environment

Provinces and territories to be consulted:

Nunavut

Applicable federal legislation: Protected under the federal *Marine Mammal Regulations* under the *Fisheries Act*. Habitat protected under section 35 of the *Fisheries Act*. When found in a National Park of Canada, the species is protected under the *Canada National Parks Act*.

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