



SUBMISSION TO THE
NUNAVUT WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT BOARD

FOR

Information:

Decision: X

Issue: 2017 Muskox (*Ovibos moschatus*) distribution and abundance, muskox management units MX-08, Boothia Peninsula

Background

- The Boothia Peninsula is an example of a location where muskoxen are re-colonizing their historical range. In 1985, the Boothia Peninsula was known to be devoid of muskox.
- In 1995, a muskox abundance survey in this area resulted in an estimate of 554 ± 205 (S.E) animals. Since then, community members in Taloyoak have indicated a consistent increase in muskox numbers.
- Hunters in Taloyoak fear that muskox will start negatively impacting the caribou calving ground on the Boothia Peninsula, as muskoxen displace caribou from their habitat.
- The current Total Allowable Harvest (TAH) of 66 for MX-08 was set on July 1, 2014 under the Muskox Total Allowable Harvest Order, and this annual limit has remained consistent since then.
- The Department of Environment (DOE) has engaged with the community of Taloyoak and respective co-management partners (Nunavut Tunngavik Inc., Hunters and Trappers Organizations (HTO), Kitikmeot Regional Wildlife Board). The DOE will continue to work closely with these groups to manage the muskox population of the Boothia Peninsula (MX-08) for sustainability in order to meet conservation, management, and food security needs of the ecosystem and local community.

Current Status

- Based on local knowledge, there is a need to re-evaluate the existing TAH of 66 to the meet current management needs. Community members in Taloyoak are requesting an increase in harvesting opportunities, to keep muskox numbers low and preserve habitat for caribou.
- A population survey was conducted, based out of the community of Kugluktuk, from August 7 to August 12, 2017 to determine the abundance and distribution of muskox in MX-08. During the survey, 702 adult muskoxen were recorded on transect resulting in an estimated abundance of $3,649 \pm 316$ (S.E.) animals in MX-08. The muskoxen population in MX-08 has increased since the last survey.

- This year the community members ran out of tags before the end of the harvesting year. The current quota has been filled, and they are requesting additional tags.

Consultations:

- The progress of this research and monitoring effort was communicated during the Kitikmeot Muskox Management Plan Face-to-Face meeting and shared with all HTOs during the Kitikmeot Regional Wildlife Board Annual General Meeting (KRWB AGM) in September 2017 and the KRWB AGM in September 2018.
- On April 23, 2019, the draft report and the management recommendation were discussed with the Taloyoak HTO board and community members. The HTO recommended increasing the current TAH and indicated that a harvesting rate of 6% (218 animals based on new population estimate) is not sufficient to maintain stable muskox numbers.

Accommodations:

- As a result of the consultations, changes were made to the report to include more local and traditional knowledge, including:
 - Additional information on muskoxen movements – animals might not only move from Prince of Wales and Sommerset Island, they can come from other areas.
 - Explanations on how muskox and caribou population dynamics are inversely related, and emphasizing the need to keep the caribou population healthy and close to the community.
- Although the DOE, the Taloyoak HTO, and the community members agree to increase the present quota, the HTO and the community members do not support a continued harvesting rate of 6% (TAH of 218) as this is not considered sufficient. They would like to keep the TAH, but increase the harvesting rate to 7-8%, which will result in a TAH of 255-288.

Recommendation

- *The Department of Environment is recommending to the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board an increase in the TAH of 66 to 275 muskoxen for the Muskox Management Unit MX-08.*