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Manasie Audlakiak
Acting Chairperson
Nunavut Wildlife Management Board

July 29th, 2013

Re: NWMB Hearing for Foxe Basin Polar Bear

Dear Manasie Audlakiak,

Thank you for inviting WWF to provide input to the decisions being made by the NWMB to support long-term sustainable wildlife populations in Nunavut.

We share the same fundamental perspective as the Government of Nunavut (GN), QIA and the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board, in ensuring healthy wildlife populations over the long term. We also recognize the importance of polar bears for Inuit traditional use, as well as the opportunities that exist for communities to benefit from guided hunting opportunities and the sale of products.

Moreover, we recognize that, with the appropriate monitoring and regulations in place, hunters can be the best advocates for and practitioners of long term conservation. We acknowledge the important work that the Government of Nunavut's Department of Environment has done to set sustainable harvest levels that balance the best available scientific information and Inuit observations, and apply the precautionary principle for the prudent management of polar bear harvest levels.

In the current matter under review, regarding the total allowable harvest for the Foxe Basin polar bear sub-population, WWF supports the GN's recommendation from August 2012 – for a TAH of 106 bears – and recommends that it be retained without an upward adjustment, and that the population be managed as per the existing Memorandum of Understanding for Foxe Basin.

We recognize that polar bear defense kills have increased in some communities in Foxe Basin, and that is a challenge for the communities. We support NU-DOE's efforts to reduce defense kills through their Wildlife Damage Prevention Program, education initiatives to reduce attractants, and the efforts of wildlife officers. In recent years WWF has personally participated in, and financially supported initiatives by GN and the Hamlet of Arviat that have been successful in reducing defence kills in that community. We are also working with GN, through a signed co-operation agreement, to develop a polar bear guard training manual and program that will contribute to reducing defense kills in Foxe Basin and throughout Nunavut.

Thanks once more for giving us the opportunity to provide input on this important decision.

Sincerely,

Martin von Mirbach
Director, Arctic Program
WWF-Canada