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Minister of Environment
Minista Avatilititjutinut
Ministre de l'Environnement

Willie Nakoolak
Acting Chairperson
Nunavut Wildlife Management Board
PO Box 1379
IQALUIT NU X0A 0H0

AUG 20 2010

Dear Mr. Nakoolak:

Re: Request for a decision of the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board for the Western Hudson Bay polar bear population

Attached please find a request for a decision of the Nunavut Wildlife management Board for the management of the Western Hudson Bay polar bear population (WH).

This request for a decision of the NWMB is being submitted as a Ministerial Management Initiative as per Article 5.3.25 of the Nunavut Land Claim Agreement (NLCA). Harvesting in WH generally begins in October, and therefore I request that the Board deal with the matter expediently and make a decision on this request by October 1, 2010.

The attached request provides two options for the NWMB to review when considering the issue. I of course recognize that the NWMB is in no way bound or obligated to decide upon any of these options, and will make the decision it deems appropriate.

If your staff has any questions about this request or require additional information they should contact Drikus Gissing, Director, Wildlife Management Division.

I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Daniel Shewchuk
Minister of Environment

Cc. Drikus Gissing, Director, Wildlife Management Division



SUBMISSION TO THE

NUNAVUT WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT BOARD

FOR

Information:

Decision: X

Issue: A management decision for the Western Hudson Bay polar bear population.

Background:

In 2004/2005 the TAH for the Western Hudson polar bear population (WH) was increased from 38 to 56. Subsequent to that time, conservation concerns were identified and the TAH was decreased to 38 in 2007/2008, and then to 8 in 2008/2009 to address the conservation concerns.

The available scientific information indicates that productivity of the population is very low, and that it will continue to decline even with no harvest.

Inuit observations are that there are many bears in the population, and that more bears than usual are being seen, and more bear-human encounters are taking place. The harvest in 2009/2010 was 18 bears, of which 4 were regular hunts, 2 were sport hunts, and 12 were defense kills. In 2008/2009 there were 6 defense kills.

Pursuant to the flexible quota system, based on the harvest in 2009/2010, the harvest level for 2010/2011 should be 2. However, based on the recent history of harvesting from this population, more than 2 bears will be harvested in defense of life and property.

Presently a new analysis of all recent scientific data for WH is being conducted. This analysis will be completed in the winter of 2010/2011, and result in a new population estimate. In addition, a pilot aerial population survey is being conducted in 2010, with a complete survey to follow in 2011. Combined these initiatives will result in a substantial increase in information about WH.

Consultations:

Since 2005 a number of consultations and other community engagements have taken place on this issue. The response from the communities has been consistent that most individuals do not believe the scientific information is accurate.

Recommendations:

Given the realities of needing to manage the killing of polar bears in defence of life and property, it is recommended that the NWMB make a management decision on an appropriate 2010/2011 harvest level for WH. As per the attached letter, this request is being submitted as a Ministerial Management Initiative as per section 5.3.25 of the Nunavut Land Claim Agreement. As such a decision of the NWMB is requested in sufficient time for management response to be implemented by October 1, 2010.

Attachments:

Appendix 1 - Options for a management response to the conservation concern with the West Hudson Bay population of polar bears.

Appendix 1 - Options for a management response to the conservation concern with the West Hudson Bay population of polar bears

NOTE: The present TAH for the Western Hudson Bay polar bear population is 8

Option 1

Pursuant to the MOU, do not make any adjustments to the harvest level, and leave it at 2 for 2010/2011 understanding a person may always kill wildlife if it is necessary to preserve a human life or to protect that person's property (NLCA S.5.6.52).

Option 2

Recognizing that defense kills will occur, set the harvest level at 8 and pursuant to the NLCA leave it to the RWO to determine how best to manage the allocation.