



Fisheries and Oceans
Canada

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DEC 14 2015

Mr. Ben Kovic
Chairperson
Nunavut Wildlife Management Board
Box 1379
Iqaluit, NU
X0A 0H0

Dear Mr. Kovic:

Re: Cancellation of the “REQUEST FOR DECISION to Establish a Total Allowable Harvest, Basic Needs Level and a Management Unit Boundary for the Atlantic Walrus Stocks in Foxe Basin, Nunavut”

On September 15, 2014, Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) submitted a Request for Decision to establish a total allowable harvest (TAH) and management unit boundaries for Foxe Basin walrus at the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board's (NWMB) regular meeting. This request for decision was separated from the broader Integrated Fisheries Management Plan (IFMP) for Atlantic walrus that was being developed due to concerns with the current level of harvesting for the Foxe Basin stock identified in a November 2013 DFO Scientific Advisory Report. The NWMB scheduled a public hearing to consider the request for decision.

In March of 2015, DFO became aware of new information that may influence the sustainable harvest levels recommended by the department for Foxe Basin walrus. DFO discussed this information with Nunavut co-management organizations and requested the NWMB postpone the public hearing until the new information could be reviewed. On April 9, 2015, the NWMB adjourned its in-person public hearing for an indefinite period of time to allow DFO to review the information and provide scientific advice.

DFO convened a conference call on November 27, 2015 with representatives from the NWMB, the Qikiqtaaluk Wildlife Board (QWB), Igloolik and Hall Beach Hunters and Trappers Organizations (HTO) and Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated (NTI) to discuss the preliminary results of the DFO science review. Although the results have not been published, the analysis suggests that there does not appear to be a concern with the current level of harvesting for Foxe Basin walrus. As this was the primary reason for the request for decision currently before the NWMB, DFO recommended that it be cancelled. No concerns were identified with this approach.

Therefore, through this letter, DFO rescinds its "*Request for Decision to Establish a Total Allowable Harvest, Basic Needs Level and a Management Unit Boundary for the Atlantic Walrus Stocks in Foxe Basin, Nunavut*" submitted to the NWMB in September 2014, and offers the following rationale and associated considerations:

- Preliminary analysis by DFO of newly acquired scientific information indicates that there does not appear to be a concern with the current level of harvesting for the Foxe Basin walrus stock, which was the primary reason for the original request for decision.
- The walrus working group has finalized the IFMP for Atlantic walrus and consultations have been completed. The IFMP provides the management framework for walrus in the Nunavut Settlement Area under two scenarios: (1) where a TAH has been established; and (2) where a TAH has not been established. At this time no TAH recommendations are included in the IFMP. It is anticipated that the IFMP will be submitted to the NWMB at the March 2016 meeting.
- In submissions to the NWMB, the QWB and NTI recommended that TAHs not be established until the IFMP for Atlantic walrus is approved. Cancelling the current request for decision would facilitate this coordinated approach.
- Once the new science advice for Foxe Basin walrus is published, additional consultations with the affected communities will occur, after which TAH recommendations will be submitted to the NWMB.

If you require further information or clarification on the information contained in this letter, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



David Burden
Regional Director General
Central & Arctic Region
Fisheries and Oceans Canada

CC:

Jason Akearok, Chief Executive Officer, Nunavut Wildlife Management Board
James Qillaq, Chairperson, Qikaqtaaluk Wildlife Board
David Aqqiaruq, Chairperson, Igloolik Hunters & Trappers Organization
Manasie Naullaq, Chairperson- Hall Beach Hunters & Trappers Organization, Co-
Chairperson, Walrus Working Group
Paul Irmgaut, Director of Wildlife, Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated
Janelle Kennedy, A/ Director of Fisheries and Sealing, Government of Nunavut
Scott Gilbert, Regional Director, DFO Fisheries Management
Larry Dow, Director Northern Operations, DFO
Michelle Wheatley, Regional Director, DFO Science
Rob Young, Division Manager, DFO Science
Stefan Romberg, DFO Resource Management