



To: Nunavut Wildlife Management Board

From: NTI Wildlife & Environment

Subject: NWMB Public Hearing on Foxe Basin walrus

Date: March 10th, 2015

Issue: The adequacy of consultations in establishing a Total Allowable Harvest for Foxe Basin Walrus.

Background:

In 2007, the NWMB requested information from Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) to use in establishing a Total Allowable Harvest (TAH) for walrus stocks or populations in the Nunavut Settlement Area.

At that time DFO did not have adequate information on Atlantic Walrus; a Northern Foxe Basin working group was established in 2007 consisting of Hunters & Trappers Organization (Igloolik & Hall Beach HTO), Qikiqtaaluk Wildlife Board (QWB), Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. (NTI), DFO, Elders, and occasional invited guests.

The goal of the working group was to develop an Integrated Fisheries Management Plan (IFMP) for Atlantic Walrus that would identify the main objectives, possible management measures, and requirements for a sustainable walrus harvest in Foxe Basin.

One of the main concerns expressed by the two Foxe Basin communities (Igloolik & Hall Beach) was the proposed Baffinland Iron Mine port construction at Steensby Inlet and the proposed year round shipping route. Communities engaged in this process agreed to work cooperatively on the Atlantic walrus IFMP to address walrus habitat concerns considered important for their long term persistence in the area.

In May 2014, a draft IFMP was presented to the two Foxe Basin communities, along with total allowable removal recommendations from DFO science, potential struck and lost rates, and the proposed Management Unit boundaries. Communities immediately expressed their concerns about the proposed population boundaries and the population estimates developed by DFO science. The boundaries did not agree with their knowledge of walrus including walrus movements. Further, communities and HTOs expressed that the survey design and other logistical problems such as weather had affected the survey results. They have expressed that the information including the surveys were incomplete due to lack of coverage.

The Working Groups established a timeline for completion of the Walrus Integrated Fisheries Management Plan by January 2016.

Current Status and Concerns:

The management plan has not been finalized and the establishment of a TAH will likely compromise the management plan and the effort by DFO and Inuit to achieve long term conservation goals for walrus as initially planned.

DFO's TAH recommendation of 116 was introduced at the very last community consultation between Igloodik and Hall Beach along with the draft IFMP on Atlantic walrus. NTI has discussed this matter with representatives from QWB and the HTO's of Hall Beach and Igloodik, and they did not have any recollection on a discussion on specific numbers.

The communities and the two HTOs felt that the IFMP on Atlantic walrus should be completed first, before any TAH. The HTOs and communities have also argued that any proposed TAH would need to be informed by a complete aerial survey of the whole area of North Foxe Basin. Inuit must be involved in the design of the survey, and its completion.

Communities are supportive of the management plan process but do not support the total allowable harvest recommendations due to lack of communication and consensus on management boundaries, survey design and survey results.

The suggested harvest restrictions do not consider or recognize Inuit systems of wildlife management and work against the conservation of wildlife and protection of critical habitat (ss. 5.1.2) as they are not supported by the communities and the respective Hunter's and Trapper's Organizations and Regional Wildlife Organization. HTOs have expressed that proceeding with the harvest recommendations would produce more challenges than solutions.

The communities and HTOs do not feel that there a valid reason to restrict or limit Inuit harvesting as per 5.3.3: (a) to effect a valid conservation purpose, (b) to give effect to the allocation system outlined in this Article (NLCA Article 5), to other provisions of this Article and to Article 40; or (c) to provide for public health or public safety

Recommendation:

In considering these factors, NTI is of the opinion that in the matter of establishing a TAH for the proposed Foxe Basin population, adequate consultation was not achieved. NTI argues that adequate consultation for this population would need to consider the following points:

1. Any consideration of establishment of management units and restrictions of Inuit harvesting of walrus for Foxe Basin should be postponed until adequate consultation has occurred with the affected communities and the management plan has been finalized.
2. A full complete aerial survey of all areas of North Foxe Basin should be conducted with participation and input from the affected HTOs and the communities.

3. Once a complete aerial survey is done then the information should be given to the HTO and the communities in a timely manner and integrated into the final IFMP for North Foxe Basin walrus.
4. After the Integrated Fisheries Management Plan for North Foxe Basin is accepted, then the Department Of Fisheries can do community consultations on their recommended TAH using the most accurate and latest information.