




NUNAVUT WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT BOARD

HIGHLIGHTS OF MEETING #17 10-12 FEBRUARY 1998

GJOA HAVEN

1. This was the seventeenth regular meeting of the NWMB, and the first meeting conducted in Gjoa Haven.
2. The Board took advantage of the occasion to swear-in three Board members who were recently re-appointed by the Governor in Council:
 - Mr. Kevin McCormick, re-appointed on the advice of the Minister of the Environment (Canada),
 - Mr. Gordon Koshinsky, re-appointed on the advice of the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans (Canada), and
 - Ms. Meeka Mike, re-appointed on the advice of the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Canada), in consultation with the Commissioner-in-Executive Council.
3.  The Board reviewed and approved its 1998/99 budget estimates, for submission to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. There has been no positive response to date from DIAND to the Board's efforts to have a new funding arrangement in place for the coming year.
4. The Board heard a presentation from the Canadian Wildlife Service on the status of legislation and related efforts to protect species at risk. Bill C-65, the Canadian Endangered Species Protection Act, died on the Order Paper when the federal election was called in the spring of 1997. The Canadian Wildlife Ministers recently affirmed this as a matter of continuing priority, and identified a need to focus initially on moving forward with the National Accord for the Protection of Species at Risk. The Ministers acknowledged three aspects of the Bill as previously drafted that require attention: civil actions, transboundary species, and the role and relationship of the Ministers' Council and COSEWIC. An updated Bill will likely be introduced in the fall of 1998.
5. The Board heard an update from the Canadian Wildlife Service on the status of the Mid-continent population of Lesser Snow Geese. Those components of the population nesting in the James Bay and Hudson Bay areas have increased greatly over the past 20 or more years, and the geese are destroying some of the coastal lowland habitat on which they and some other wildlife populations depend. The overall population growth is estimated at about 5% annually, and ways to control this growth are being actively considered. Experts are advocating an increase in the overall harvest by a factor of two or more.



6. The Board was updated on progress towards amending the Migratory Birds Convention. Amendments endorsed by both countries

include provisions:

- Provisions for aboriginal persons having aboriginal or treaty rights to harvest migratory birds and their eggs throughout the year, and to offer such birds for barter, trade or sale within or between aboriginal communities as provided in particular treaties or agreements,
- Provisions for qualified non-aboriginal residents in areas of northern Canada, as permitted by particular agreements or treaties, to harvest migratory birds throughout the year, and
- Provision for the possibility of an earlier opening of the fall hunting season in northern Canada generally.

It still remains for the US President to sign the necessary Order-in-Council and for the two countries to exchange instruments of ratification. Canada will then need to make appropriate changes to legislation and regulations to bring the ratified new Convention into force. The USA is also amending its Migratory Birds Convention with Mexico and this may delay ratification of the new Convention between Canada and the USA.



7. The Board was informed of recent and proposed funding reductions for the Polar Continental Shelf Project (PCSP) by the Canada Department of Natural Resources. PCSP has been a major provider of logistic support for research projects in the Arctic. Without this assistance the amount of research that can be undertaken, including that funded by the Board, will inevitably decline. The Board decided to formally register its concern with the Minister in charge.
8. The Board made its final decision on harvesting restrictions for striped pink shrimp in the Nunavut Settlement Area. It was decided to establish a quota of 500 metric tonnes in the NSA for 1998, along with a total catch limit of 1000 metric tonnes.
9. On the matter of the dispute between NTI (supported by NWMB) and DFO concerning turbot allocations and related matters in Davis Strait, the Board concluded that the legal questions currently before the Courts are unlikely to be resolved before the 1998 allocations need to be made. The sincere advice and efforts of the Board to dissuade Makivik Corporation from seeking intervenor status in DFO's appeal of the initial decision of the Federal Court were not successful. The Board looks forward to the forthcoming visit of the DFO Minister to Iqaluit and the Baffin tour by the Standing Committee on Fisheries as opportunities for improving the basis for effective fisheries management.



10. The Board heard from the Department of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development (DRWED) about plans for recovery and management of Peary caribou. The Department is now engaged in consultations with the Regional Wildlife Organizations (RWOs) and the affected communities, after which it aims to draft a Management Plan for the consideration of the NWMB and the Inuvialuit Wildlife Management Advisory Council. The Department continues to develop plans to survey Peary caribou in the eastern High Arctic in 1998.
11. The Board heard conflicting advice about the inclusion of Kent Peninsula in alternative muskox management areas. The Board requested its staff and DRWED to consider this matter further, and to develop a definitive recommendation. Community dissatisfaction regarding the boundary between polar bear management areas at Taloyoak has apparently been put to rest by the Department through consultations.
12. The Board was advised that DRWED has let a contract for an analysis of all existing data pertaining to the use of tranquilizers and collars for the study of polar bears since the introduction of the sedative agent Telazol in the mid 1980s. The results of this study,

expected by late summer, should allow the NWMB to decide if more work is needed on this important question.



13. The Board was advised that DRWED is enlarging its capacity in the area of conservation education through new staffing. A major focus will be on training Field Officers to improve their proficiency in consulting with resource users, particularly in the context of new wildlife legislation being developed. As a first step in the legislative initiative, a contract has been awarded to the Canadian Institute of Resources Law to identify required changes to the NWT Wildlife Act. The NWMB will be consulted regularly on the progress of this matter.

14. The Board was advised that the issue of quota for the Kane Basin polar bear population had been resolved through consultation involving all the interested parties. The Board accordingly decided upon a quota of one polar bear for Grise Fiord from this population for the 1997/98 season. The importance of achieving a co-management agreement with Greenland was re-emphasized, and DRWED has committed to negotiating a new Memorandum of Understanding for polar bear management with Grise Fiord.

15. The Board revisited the proposal from Noah Kadlak of Arctic Bear Productions to conduct and film a traditional polar bear hunt. Members expressed inclination not to stand in the way of the hunt as such, but remained concerned that filming of the event could have a negative impact on other polar bear harvests in Nunavut. It was decided to formally request the RWOs to obtain the advice of their respective communities.



16. The Department of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development tabled a report on the production and marketing of wild and farmed Arctic charr. The report was commissioned as one element of response to concerns that aquaculture development using charr could undermine the wild-fish fisheries.

17. It was learned that the Beverly/Qamanirjuaq Caribou Management Board recommended in favour of the NWMB's decision to approve the request of the Arviat HTO to increase their commercial quota of Qamanirjuaq caribou by 150 animals to a total of 220.

18. The Board heard that its Inuit Bowhead Knowledge Study is progressing near to schedule, aiming for completion in July 1998 as per the terms of the NLCA.

19. The Board's Harvest Study is proceeding reasonably well, albeit with problems in some communities now mainly confined to the Baffin Region. A new Data Entry Clerk was recently hired for the Kitikmeot Region. Copies of the new Harvest Study calendars were distributed to the Members and received favourable comment. The recently-established NWMB Harvest Study Committee plans to meet soon and is expected to play a vital role in the general direction and evaluation of the Harvest Study.



20. The Board's Southeast Baffin Beluga Management Committee remains active in its efforts to develop and maintain a positive management system and to prevent the sorts of controversies that erupted in the past. The Board approved a number of recommendations that were recently developed by the Committee. Three of these items pertain to research, notably:

- To discontinue the sampling program until all existing samples are analysed and reported.
- To attempt the tagging program again in 1998, subject to the approval of the Pangnirtung HTO.
- To delay population surveys as per the Management Plan until 1999.

21. The Board was advised on progress towards setting up the NWMB Resource Centre. A major component of the Centre will be a

Stock Database, with provision for electronic information-sharing among NWMB and the three participating government agencies.

The Nunavut Research Institute is also involved.



22. The Board decided that it was not yet comfortable to endorse its own active participation in the formation of a Nunavut Marine Council. Much doubt was expressed whether such a Council would enlarge the Board's capacity to fulfill its own mandate. A need was identified for face-to-face discussions with the proponent agencies, and staff were instructed to make arrangements.
23. The Board approved a donation to assist with the costs of an Abilities Conference proposed for Iqaluit in March.
24. The Board decided to nominate Ben Kovic for re-appointment to the position of NWMB Chairperson, to take effect when his current term expires in June.
25. The Board scheduled its next regular meeting for the week of 11 May 1998, in Broughton Island.
26. The Board will conduct a Special Meeting in Iqaluit on 10-12 March to review research applications from government agencies to the Nunavut Wildlife Research Trust Fund for the 1998/99 research season.



27. Board Members and staff participated in a community feast and public meeting the evening of February 11. Following introductions, Mr. Kovic explained the operations of the NWMB. Questions and concerns from the floor pertained to a variety of matters, including:
 - o the apparent take-over by musk ox of caribou habitat in the area,
 - o the low harvest of musk ox permitted in the area, and especially in the hunting zone immediately adjacent to the community,
 - o the forthcoming bowhead hunt at Pangnirtung,
 - o tagging or collaring of fish and wildlife for research purposes,
 - o the role of outpost camps in maintaining Inuit culture, and
 - o the inconvenience to hunters of quotas and other harvest restrictions.

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