



SUBMISSION TO THE
NUNAVUT WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT BOARD
FOR

Information: X

Decision:

Issue: Implementation of the Canada - Greenland Memorandum of Understanding for shared polar bear populations.

Background:

The Baffin Bay (BB) and Kane Basin (KB)) polar bear populations are shared between Nunavut (Canada) and Greenland.

Canada, Greenland, and Nunavut signed an agreement for the BB and KB populations in 2009. Implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) will bring Canada and Greenland into compliance with the International Agreement for Conservation of Polar Bears and their Habitat.

The Government of Nunavut, the governments of Greenland and Canada, and Inuit from both countries are represented on the Joint Commission, which was established under the Canada-Greenland MOU. The Joint Commission's mandate is to make coordinated recommendations on the sustainable management of polar bears in BB and KB populations.

In February 2010, the Joint Commission met in Canada. In May 2010, the Joint Commission, and the Traditional Knowledge Working Group, met in Greenland. Management objectives, harvest levels and research plans for the BB and KB populations were discussed.

One of the highest priorities identified by the Joint Commission is to update the population size and status information for BB, and to use research results as the basis for harvest recommendations.

Current Status:

The European Union (EU) ruled that import from BB and KB polar bear populations is detrimental to the species due to combined overharvest in Canada and Greenland.

Based on the available information, Environment Canada issued a positive Non Detriment Finding (NDF) for 12 of 13 polar bear sub-populations in Canada, and a negative NDF for one population (BB) effective March 10, 2010. Export from Canada from this population is now prohibited, although export from Nunavut to other parts of Canada is permitted.

The mandatory harvest quota system that Greenland implemented as of January 2006 has resulted in a significant reduction in the Greenland harvest in BB.

Way Forward:

The NWMB and GN must take into consideration harvest by Greenland in its management actions for shared populations.

Close cooperation between the Government of Nunavut, the Government of Greenland, and Environment Canada (EC), on behalf of the Government of Canada, is required in the management of polar bear populations that are shared between Canada and Greenland.

Under the Joint Commission's guidance, Greenland and Nunavut biologists are undertaking necessary collaborative research. A pilot aerial survey took place in 2010, and more extensive work is planned in 2011, pending determination of suitable methodologies for a new population survey.

With the signing of the Canada-Nunavut-Greenland MOU, the BB TAH reduction over the next 4 years, and a new population survey, the major obstacles to reversing the NDF will be met. These activities will help to reverse the European Union and Environment Canada NDFs, and will help to re-establish and bring back to Baffin communities the benefits of attracting international sport hunters - if they wish to do so.