

# SUBMISSION TO THE NUNAVUT WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT BOARD

## FOR

**Information: X**

**Decision:**

**Issue:** Information regarding the possible addition of the Northern Bottlenose Whale (*Hyperoodon ampullatus*) Baffin Bay-Davis Strait-Labrador Sea population to the List of Wildlife Species at Risk on the *Species at Risk Act* as a species of Special Concern.

### **Background:**

As per 3.0 of the Harmonized Listing Process, DFO is informing NWMB of COSEWIC assessment results for the Northern Bottlenose Whale. In Nunavut, the Northern Bottlenose Whale may occasionally be found in small numbers in Davis Strait and the Labrador Sea in summer. As this species is not hunted for subsistence, adding it to the List of Wildlife Species at Risk under the *SARA* would appear to have little impact on Nunavut residents.

DFO Newfoundland Region is coordinating consultations for the Baffin Bay-Davis Strait-Labrador Sea population of the Northern Bottlenose Whale. They have developed a consultation information sheet which is included with this note (not translated).

DFO considers that an abridged listing process may be advisable. In keeping with the MOU, DFO will send letters to the HTOs in Iqaluit, Pangnirtung, Qikiqtarjuaq and Clyde River letting them know about the COSEWIC designation and asking if they want to be consulted on possible *SARA* listing of this species. Letters will also be sent to the Qikiqtaaluk Wildlife Board, Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, Nunavut Inuit Wildlife Secretariat, Baffin Fisheries Coalition, Cumberland Sound Fisheries, Qikiqtaaluk Corporation and Government of Nunavut – Department of Environment.

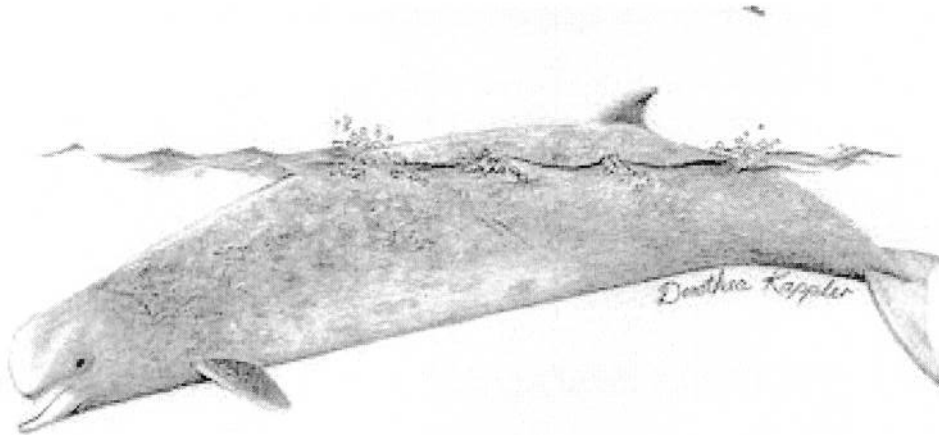
A designation of Special Concern does not include any automatic prohibitions against the killing, harming or harassing of these animals, but does require the development of a Management Plan.

### ***Northern Bottlenose Whale***

The Northern Bottlenose Whale, *Hyperoodon ampullatus*, is a beaked whale found only in the northern North Atlantic. It is a sturdy, medium-sized (7-9 m; 22-30') whale, dolphin-like in appearance, with a beak and falcate dorsal fin, but much larger than most dolphins (Figure 1). The species is among the most accomplished, and perhaps the deepest, diver of all mammals and is known for its tendency to approach vessels.

### **Distribution**

Northern Bottlenose Whales are found in deep (>500m) waters of the northern North Atlantic, north of about 40°N. There are two recognized areas of concentration in Canadian waters, along the edge of the Scotian Shelf and off Labrador, including southern Baffin Bay (Figure 2). The Baffin Bay-Davis Strait-Labrador Sea and Scotian Shelf populations are genetically distinct. The Scotian Shelf animals are generally smaller, may breed later in the year, and have higher pollutant loads than those in the Baffin Bay-Davis Strait-Labrador Sea population. Movement between the two populations seems to be very rare.



**Figure 1:** Northern Bottlenose Whale (© Parks Canada/Dorothea Kappler, 1995).

### **Habitat**

Northern Bottlenose Whales prefer waters with depths between 800-1,500 m (2600-5000') along the continental slope.

### **Biology**

Males become sexually mature at 7-9 years old and females at 8-13, thereafter giving birth to single offspring about every two years. The life span is at least 37 years, and the generation time is about 15.5 years. Movements by whales of the Baffin Bay-Davis Strait-Labrador Sea population have not been studied. While Northern Bottlenose Whales eat various deep-water fishes and squids, they are specialists compared with other deep-diving mammals, particularly favouring squids.

### **Population Sizes and Trends**

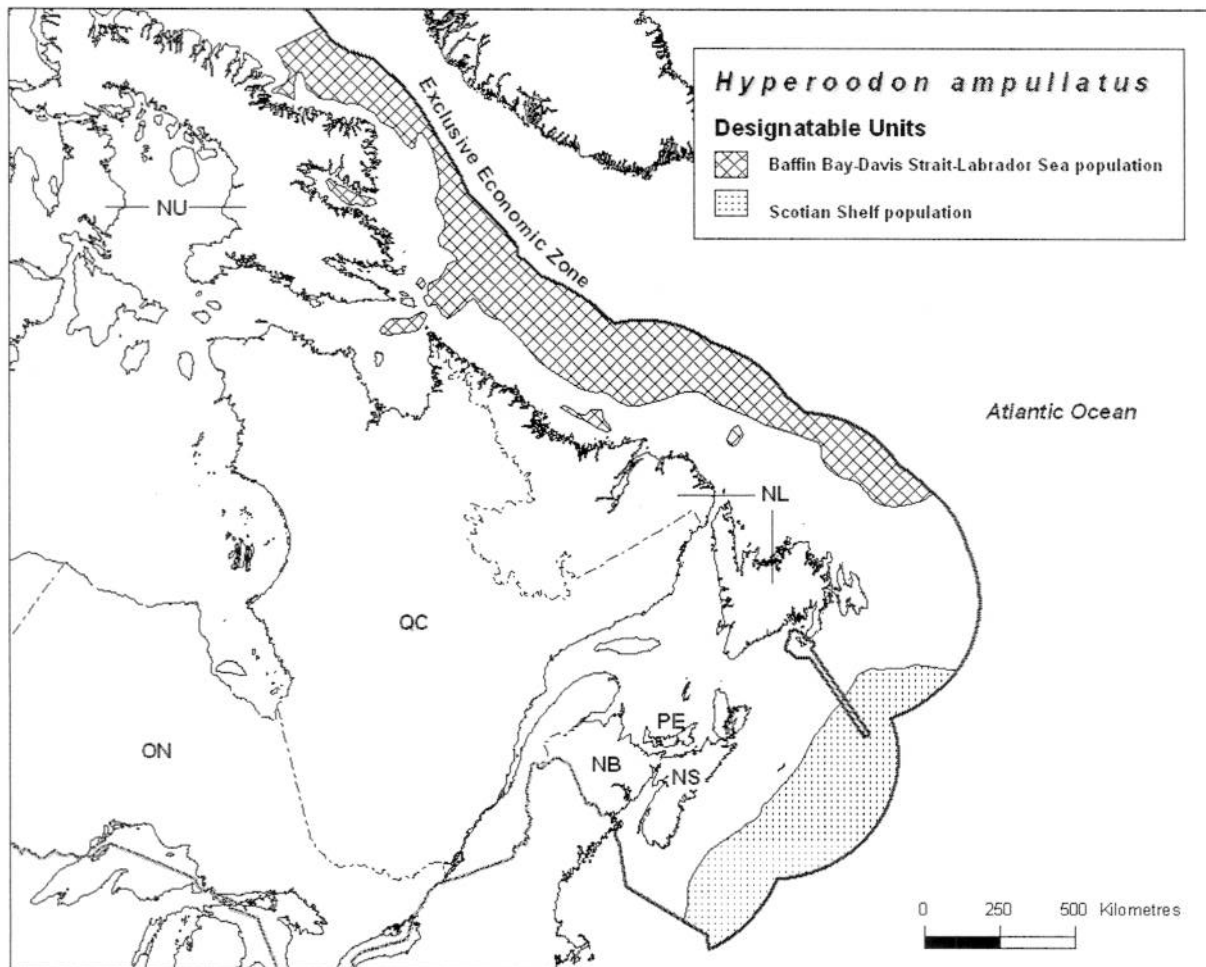
There is no estimate of the size of the Baffin Bay-Davis Strait-Labrador Sea population.

### **Threats and Limiting Factors**

Northern Bottlenose Whales in Canadian waters face two principal threats, entanglement in fishing gear and ocean noise. In both cases the threat is actual, but the extent of harm is uncertain. There are also concerns about contaminant levels in whale tissues, possibly related to oil and gas development activities.

### Protection, Status, and Ranks

In Canada, hunting and other activities deliberately harmful to Northern Bottlenose Whales are covered by the Marine Mammal Regulations of the Fisheries Act. The Scotian Shelf population was listed as Endangered under Schedule 1 of SARA in April 2006. The Baffin Bay-Davis Strait-Labrador Sea population was implicitly considered “not at risk” when the species as a whole was assessed by COSEWIC in 1993.



**Figure 2:** Map of the distribution of the two populations of Northern Bottlenose Whale.

The complete COSEWIC status report for the Northern Bottlenose Whale can be obtained from the SARA Registry at:  
[http://www.sararegistry.gc.ca/virtual\\_sara/files/cosewic/sr\\_northern\\_bottlenose\\_whale\\_0911\\_eng.pdf](http://www.sararegistry.gc.ca/virtual_sara/files/cosewic/sr_northern_bottlenose_whale_0911_eng.pdf)

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**Date:**

12 September 2011

**Assessment Summary – May 2011****Common name**

Northern Bottlenose Whale – Davis Strait-Labrador Sea Population

**Scientific name**

*Hyperoodon ampullatus*

**Status**

Special Concern

**Reason for designation**

The population is of Special Concern for the following reasons: (1) numbers were likely reduced by whaling in the late 1960s and early 1970s when 818 whales were taken; (2) trends in population size since then are uncertain but survey sighting rates have been low; and (3) threats from fishery interactions are documented and ongoing. There is no abundance estimate. Entanglement in fishing gear is the primary known threat but noise and contaminants are also of concern. The whales in the Baffin Bay-Davis Strait-Labrador Sea region have been genetically linked to the population off Iceland so rescue is possible.

**Occurrence**

Arctic Ocean-Atlantic Ocean

**Status history**

The Northern Bottlenose Whale was given a single designation of Not at Risk in April 1993. Split into two populations in April 1996 to allow a separate designation of the Northern Bottlenose Whale (Scotian Shelf population). The Davis Strait-Baffin Bay-Labrador Sea population was not assessed in 1996; it retained the Not at Risk designation of the original Northern Bottlenose Whale. The population was designated Special Concern in May 2011.