

# Kivalliq Musk Ox Management Plan 2010 – 2015



Prepared by

Kivalliq Wildlife Board

In collaboration with

GN Department of Environment /NTI Wildlife

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## **1.0 Summary**

Prior to the enactment of protection in 1917 (Burch, 1977), Musk ox populations throughout the central arctic were hunted to near extinction. Although limited information is available on the status of musk ox populations in much of the eastern Mainland (Fournier and Gunn, 1998), musk ox populations throughout Nunavut are currently re-colonizing much of their historical range. Most Kivalliq harvesters have reported increased sightings of Musk ox in close proximity to their communities which indicates that the animals have expanded their ranges significantly over the last few decades, in some areas as far as the coastline.

The Kivalliq Musk ox population management plan will serve as a tool to assist the co-management partners, the Kivalliq Wildlife Board (KWB), GN Department of Environment and NTI Wildlife, in properly protecting, conserving and managing the musk ox of the Kivalliq region. Arviat, Whale Cove, Rankin Inlet, Chesterfield Inlet, Baker Lake, Repulse Bay and Coral Harbour represent the seven Kivalliq communities who harvest Musk ox from the two populations in questions and are represented on the KWB by their respective HTO Chairmen. Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit and community consultations have been utilized throughout the development of this management plan; community involvement has been instrumental in defining the direction of Musk ox harvesting in the Kivalliq Region.

The goals of the Management Plan are to protect, conserve and manage the herd in a sustainable fashion while working co-operatively with all co-management partners. The priorities include permanent changes to the Wildlife Act Regulations reflecting boundary alterations, elimination of seasons and setting of TAH.

An action plan has been developed to identify the immediate needs of the KWB however it is the intention of the Board to revisit the Plan on an annual basis or as necessary when new information becomes available.

## **2.0 The Kivalliq Musk ox Population and Its Range**

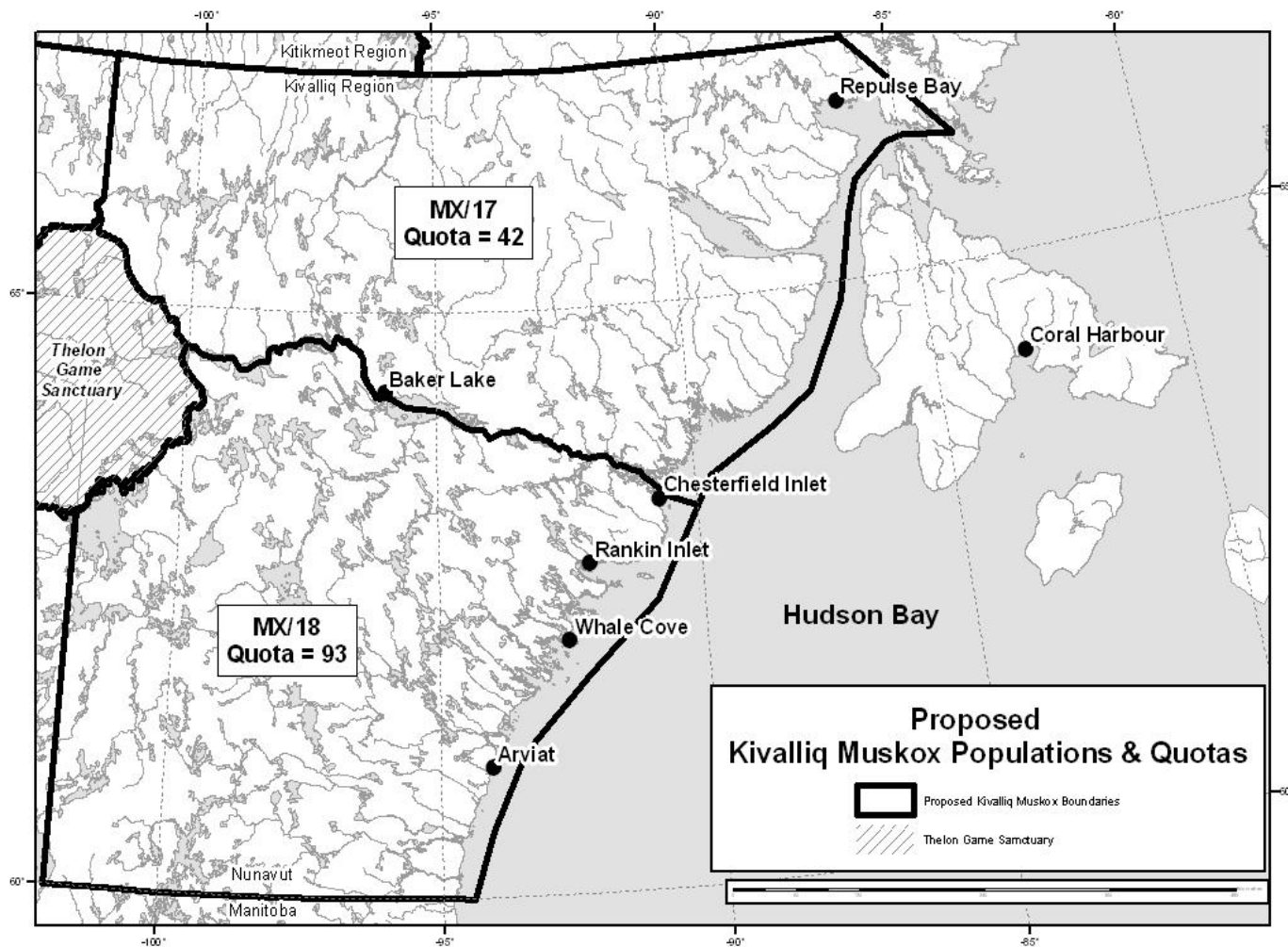
### **2.1 Musk ox Range**

The precise number and boundaries of the population are currently in question. The most recent survey data supports the division of the Kivalliq Region into two main populations of Musk ox, one north of the Chesterfield Inlet/Thelon River basins and one south (Figure 1). Up to present, low harvest rates have allowed Kivalliq Musk ox to slowly expand their range while not significantly increasing their relative densities.

### **2.2 Communities that Harvest Musk ox**

The Kivalliq Musk ox population is harvested from the seven Kivalliq communities; two zones are currently available to the communities. The two zones are divided by the Chesterfield Inlet, Baker Lake and Thelon River system; the communities of Coral Harbour and Repulse Bay harvest in the Northern zone (MX17) while the communities of Chesterfield Inlet, Rankin Inlet, Whale Cove and Arviat harvest in the Southern zone (MX18); Baker Lake harvests from both sectors. A map has been attached demonstrating the two zones.

Figure 1



### 3.0 The Necessity for a Musk ox Management Plan

#### 3.1 Historical Information on the Need for a Management Plan

The Musk ox harvesting issue has been a long drawn out affair in the Kivalliq; traditionally hunters would travel very long distances to designated areas to harvest animals. Though recent consultations have clearly indicated a desire for being able to harvest Musk ox closer to communities, this has not always been the case. In fact, up until 2003 Kivalliq communities clearly indicated their support for a management system that would allow for harvestable groups of Musk ox to become established closer to communities. The current IQ suggests that this goal

has been achieved and it is now time to turn over decisions as to where and when Musk ox can be harvested to the communities keeping in mind that intensive harvesting on the expanding edge could in time once again lead to hunters having to go longer distances to catch Musk ox.

Though this change in management direction has been recommended by the KWB for four years, the management system in Nunavut has proven cumbersome and despite agreement in management direction by all co-management partners, this did not lead to the removal of the now overly restrictive regulations. More recently, in an attempt to expedite the process, the use of exemption permits was utilized to ease the burden of unnecessary travel and allow hunters' access to Musk ox closer to their communities. Now, with the proposed increased TAH and removal of seasons, it is critical that a management plan be developed to properly manage the Musk ox of the Kivalliq and ensure that any management decisions are quickly and effectively entered into the regulatory system.

### **3.2 Role of the Co-Management Partners**

The KWB will be responsible for providing on-going IQ advice and support to co-management partners, allocating annual TAH to their respective communities, regulating their Members and fulfilling other obligations in accordance with the NLCA and reviewing the management plan as necessary.

The GN DOE will be responsible for the protection, management and sustainable use of the Kivalliq Musk ox population. The Department will also be responsible for conducting research when required, preparing reports, providing information and support to the KWB as necessary.

NTI Wildlife will be responsible for ensuring that all processes adhere to the NLCA; the Department will also provide information and support to the co-management partners as needed.

## **4.0 Community Involvement and Information**

### **4.1 The Role of Communities in Musk ox Management**

The communities of the Kivalliq will play a vital role in the management of the Musk ox population; it is through their local HTOs and subsequently on the Kivalliq Wildlife Board that their knowledge, expertise, concerns and wishes will be addressed.

### **4.2 Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit**

Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit (IQ) is the knowledge and insight gained by Inuit through generations of living in close contact with nature. For Inuit, IQ is an inseparable part of their culture and includes rules and views that affect modern resource use. The practical application of local IQ with scientific information demonstrates the value of local consultations, and documenting and preserving IQ before it is lost. The communities of the Kivalliq, through the KWB, will be consulted on an on-going basis to ensure that IQ is utilized in conjunction with scientific information in the management of the Kivalliq Musk ox population.

## **5.0 Management of Kivalliq Musk ox**

### **5.1 Goals of the Management Plan**

The goals of the Management Plan are to provide guidance and direction to the co-management partners and are as follows:

- 1.1 To manage the Musk ox in a co-operative manner that involves the full participation of communities and government.
- 1.2 To include local knowledge, Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit and scientific knowledge equally in the management process.
- 1.3 To promote local and regional involvement in decision making.
- 1.4 To protect, conserve and manage the Kivalliq Musk ox in a sustainable manner.

### **5.2 Management Plan Priorities**

In addition to the goals of the Management Plan, specific priorities have been set by the KWB and supported by the co-management partners, these are as follows:

- Permanent change to the Nunavut Wildlife Act Regulations to eliminate existing Musk ox harvesting zones and change them into two populations as demonstrated in the attached map (MX17 and MX18).
- Permanent change to the Nunavut Wildlife Act Regulations to remove existing restrictions on harvesting seasons currently imposed on Kivalliq Musk ox.
- To increase the TAH on the Kivalliq Musk ox population to reflect a 5% harvesting ratio which current information suggests is consistent with stable populations of Musk ox.

### **5.3 Population Management**

The main objective of population management is to monitor where the Kivalliq Musk ox population is within its long term cycle to help guide decisions about population monitoring actions and Musk ox harvesting.

The KWB has developed strategies to determine appropriate management actions for the Kivalliq Musk ox population that is based on the status within natural long term population fluctuations, these are as follows:

- **Strategy A – Core Management (Stable or Increasing Trend/High Population)** Core management applies at all times during population cycles and represents the minimum level of population activities that need to be conducted. Core management actions would be applied when population surveys and / or other indicators suggest that population trend is increasing or stable and that population size is above existing commercial, resident and subsistence harvesting needs.

The Kivalliq Musk ox population has been steadily increasing and expanding its range therefore the co-management partners felt that the herd could easily sustain an increase in harvesting from 3% to 5%.

- **Strategy B – Enhanced Management (Declining Trend)** As population trend declines, management actions need to be intensified to ensure that herds will be able to follow their natural cycle and increase in size again. Enhanced management will be applied when population censuses and/or other indicators suggest that population trend is declining or that population size has decreased below existing commercial, resident and subsistence harvesting needs.

In the event that the Musk ox population begins declining, the harvesting will be reduced from 5% (current stability) to 3% for a period of 5 years to promote growth of the herd; aerial and IQ surveys will be conducted to gather data and consultations will be scheduled with all co-management partners to determine if any further actions are necessary.

- **Strategy C – Critical Threshold Management (Population level below Subsistence Needs Level, SNL)** Critical Threshold management would apply when the population size is at a low point of the cycle and there are not enough Musk ox to meet the subsistence needs level. The extent of management effort required increases from high to low Musk ox population levels, and from Management Strategy A to C. Maximum effort will be required for a decreasing herd with a population level below SNL.

If the Kivalliq Musk ox population becomes critical, harvesting will be further reduced to 1-2% to promote growth and expansion of the herd, harvest levels will be reviewed on an annual basis by the co-management partners along with any new information such as aerial survey information, IQ information or any other relevant data. All co-management partners will work very closely together to ensure that the herd's welfare become a priority.

There will be on-going consultations between the KWB and its co-management partners regarding the Kivalliq Musk ox population. Musk ox is not a species at risk and there is presently no conservation concern for Musk ox in the Kivalliq Region. The current management objectives include total allowable harvest recommendations that are based upon maintaining a vital, healthy population capable of sustaining harvesting needs. These recommendations have been established through discussion with the co-management partners and will continue to be updated as necessary through Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit and systematic surveys of the population.

#### **5.4 Population Monitoring and Indicators**

Regular population monitoring by means of surveys is an essential tool for the effective management of the Kivalliq Musk ox. Although an aerial survey is scheduled for summer 2010, it is crucial that monitoring continue on a consistent basis to ensure accurate and long term information. The KWB will also encourage its Members to solicit harvesters for relevant information on Musk ox after they return from their hunts.

#### **6.0 Action Plans**

Action plans are an important part of the management plan because they describe what needs to be done to achieve the management plan's goals. Action plans outline essential tasks that must be conducted to allow communities to make appropriate decisions to ensure that herds and ranges are maintained.

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