

SUBMISSION TO THE NUNAVUT WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT BOARD

FOR

Information:

Decision: X

Issue: Continued Implementation of an Interim Narwhal Flex-Quota System for 2015/16 Hunting Season

Background:

In April 2013, the Integrated Fisheries Management Plan (IFMP) for narwhal in the Nunavut Settlement Area came into effect. The IFMP provides for a staged, evidence based development and incorporation of Marine Mammal Tag (MMT) transfer in three phases (TAB 1). Tag transfer Phase I was implemented for the 2013/14 narwhal fishery and provides for simple quota reconciliation for communities that **do not** harvest from mixed narwhal stocks (e.g. communities that harvest from the Northern Hudson Bay narwhal Management Unit and the Somerset Island Management Unit).

Tag transfer Phase III was implemented on an interim basis for the 2014/15 narwhal fishery. Phase III provides for a “flexible” quota system whereby communities can carry-over their unused Marine Mammal Tags (MMT) to use for narwhal harvesting in the next harvest year. This is similar in concept to a provision that was implemented on a trial basis in the fishery under Community Based Management for narwhal and beluga in 5 Inuit communities for 10 years; but was never subject to scientific peer review for validation of sustainability.

Tag transfer Phases II and III are to be considered for full implementation in the narwhal fishery by co-management organizations once Canadian Science Advisory Secretariat (CSAS) advice is received on their sustainable viability for the fishery. Resource Documents were reviewed on this subject matter at the National Marine Mammal Peer Review Committee Meeting in October 2014. Formal peer-reviewed science advice is expected to be published by May 2015. Phase II provides for simple transfers of migratory MMT similar to that outlined in Phase I, for the four communities on Baffin Island (Arctic Bay, Pond Inlet, Clyde River and Qikiqtarjuaq) that **do** harvest from mixed narwhal stocks.

In June 2013, the Senior Assistant Deputy Minister wrote the NWMB outlining the Department’s decision to issue a standing Non-Detriment Finding (NDF) for the narwhal population of Northern Hudson Bay and summering aggregations of Somerset Island, Admiralty Inlet, Eclipse Sound and East Baffin Island.

The 2013 Canadian narwhal NDF is considered valid until new management or scientific information is made available (e.g. updated Science advice or changes to the current management regime) at which time it will be modified, as appropriate.

NDFs are required to export products of species listed under the Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna (CITES). Narwhal are listed on Appendix II of CITES and, as a range State, Canada is responsible for assessing the conservation status of narwhal in Canadian waters to determine whether harvest is sustainable and whether exports are detrimental to the survival of the species in the wild.

NDF assessments are based on the best available scientific and management information. A negative NDF report results in the suspension of international trade in the parts and products from the stocks and populations of the species in question.

In December 2013, DFO Resource Management, in consultation with DFO Science and DFO CITES Scientific and Management Authorities developed a draft 5-point quota carry-over rule for interim implementation in the narwhal fishery until the CSAS review and advice for implementation of narwhal tag transfer Phase III is completed.

The 5-point quota carry-over rule (TAB 2) provides for the use of unused narwhal Marine Mammal Tags (MMT) from one harvest season into the next season only, after which point they expire.

The 5-point quota carry-over rule, as stipulated, does not readily appear to constitute an identifiable conservation concern for narwhal stocks based on a preliminary, non-peer reviewed examination by a narwhal science subject-matter expert.

The 5-point quota carry-over rule does however constitute a change in the management of narwhal under the IFMP. As a result, DFO CITES Scientific and Management authorities noted that this may open the current standing NDF for narwhal if challenged. The authorities also noted that it is imperative that the CSAS peer review and advice for implementation of tag transfer Phase III be conducted in 2014 on a priority basis.

In July 2014, the Minister of DFO accepted the NWMB's decision to implement the interim narwhal flex-quota system for the 2014-15 season.

Recommendations:

Pending support from the RWOs, DFO and NTI recommend that the NWMB approve the proposed interim narwhal flex-quota system (Marine Mammal Tag Transfer Policy Phase III) for continuation during the 2015-16 hunting season. Formal, peer-reviewed science advice is expected by May 2015. We expect to bring forward a request for decision to the NWMB regarding full implementation of Marine Mammal Tag Transfer Policy Phases II and III at the June Board meeting.

Attachments:

TAB 1: Three Phase Narwhal Marine Mammal Tag Transfer Implementation
TAB 2: 5-point quota carry-over rule
TAB 3: 2015-16 Narwhal Harvest Allocations under the 5-point quota carry-over rule
TAB 4: Narwhal Marine Mammal Tag Transfer Policy

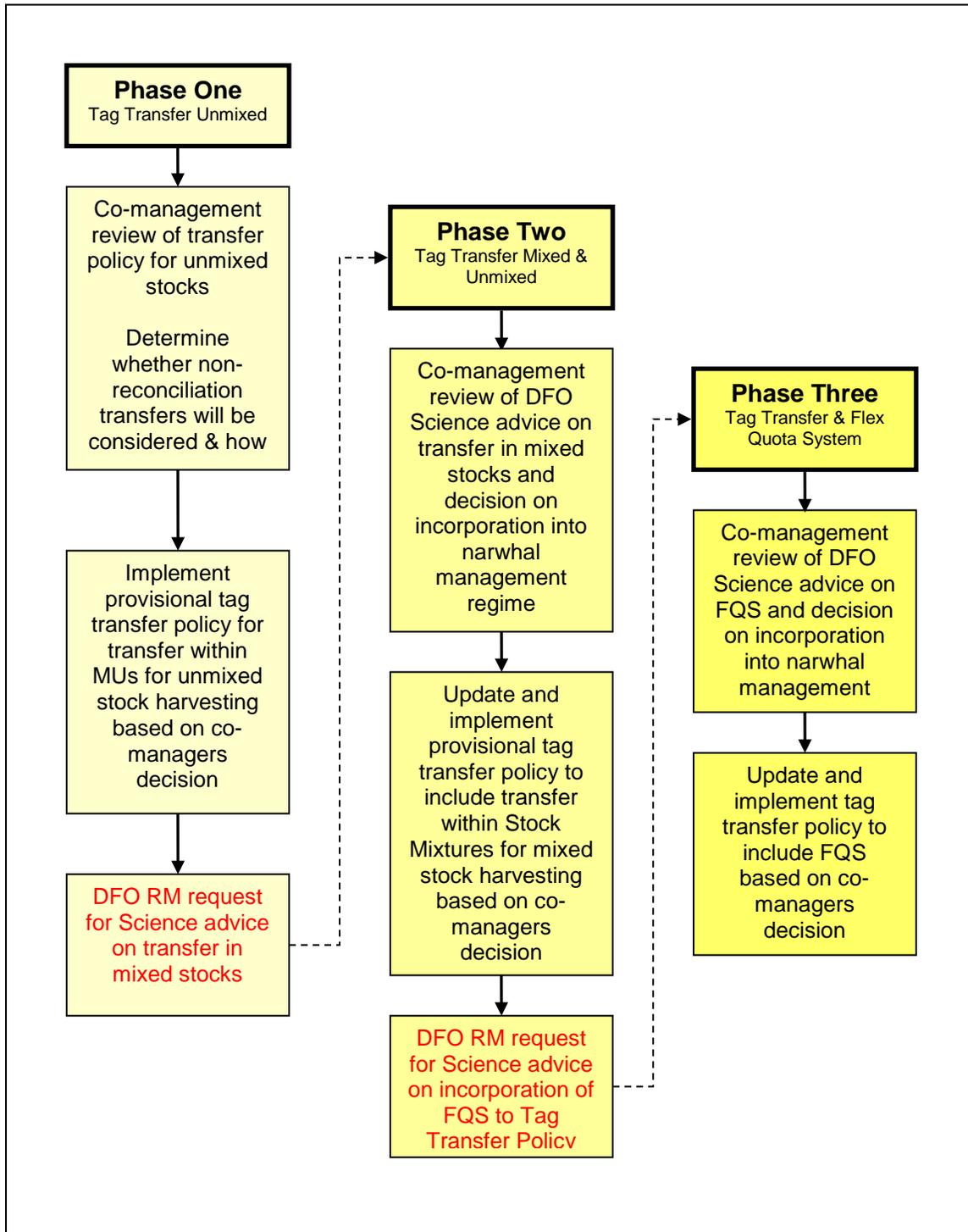
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NTI – Department of Wildlife and Environment

Date: January 30, 2015

TAB 1

Figure 1. Flow chart depicting steps in a progressive, evidence based approach to development and implementation of a harvest tag/licence transfer policy for the 2013 narwhal fishery in the Nunavut Settlement Area. The chart delineates the steps required rather than the time sequence for the process.



TAB 2

Five-point narwhal quota carry-over rule

1. All unused quota for a given harvest season within MU is carried-over for use in the subsequent harvest season. (i.e. summer to summer; migratory to migratory; all season to all season)
2. Carried-over quota (MMT) is applied first to any narwhal harvests in the subsequent harvest season before current season quota (MMT) is applied to harvest.
3. Carried-over quota expires at the end of the harvest season for which it was carried-over into.
4. The system resets to zero whenever the TAH for a MU is modified by the NWMB (i.e. unused quota in a MU prior to the TAH modification cannot be carried-over into the subsequent harvest season under the “new” TAH)
5. All other rules of tag transfer Phase I still apply. No transfer of MMT between MUs. No transfer of summer MMT with migratory MMT within a MU.

Table 1. Draft 2015-16 Narwhal Harvest Allocations under an Interim Flex-Quota System.

Management Unit	Community	Season	2013-14 MMT Allocation	2014-15 MMT Carryover	2014-15 MMT Allocation	2014-15 Reported Landings	2014-15 MMTs Available for Carry-over	Potential 2015-16 MMT Allocation
Northern Hudson Bay	11 Communities	All-Season	147	29	176	94	82	229
Admiralty Inlet	Arctic Bay	Summer	125	0	125	34	91	216
		Migratory	65	31	96	49	47	112
Eclipse Sound	Pond Inlet	Summer	137	3	140	60	80	217
		Migratory	53	41	94	0	53	106
East Baffin Island	Clyde River	Summer	42	18	60	32	28	70
		Migratory	28	3	31	13	18	46
	Qikiqtarjuaq	Summer	42	36	78	17	42	84
		Migratory	78	1	79	66	13	91
	Pangnirtung & Iqaluit	All-Season	60	42	102	9	60	120
Somerset Island	8 Communities	All-Season	450	402	852	62	450	900
Smith Sound, Jones Sound, Parry Channel	Grise Fiord	All-Season	50	43	93	8	50	100

Note: MMT = Marine Mammal Tag.

* Rankin Inlet still needs to report 2014-15 Harvest.

Appendix 5 – Marine Mammal Tag Transfer Policy

Phase One¹: Marine Mammal Tag transfers for narwhal harvesting when stocks are not mixed².

The purpose of Marine Mammal Tag transfers is to assist Regional Wildlife Organizations (RWOs) to:

1. Cover off over-harvest of a Community Harvest Limit (CHL) by allowing the exchange of unused Marine Mammal Tags between communities within the management unit, during the current narwhal harvesting year
2. Plan for, and allow, transfers of Marine Mammal Tags between communities within a management unit, during the current narwhal harvesting year, to maximize harvests in response to year to year variance in narwhal availability.
3. When there are not enough unused Marine Mammal Tags available for exchange, reconcile over-harvests within the management unit by reducing the following year's allocation and harvest from the community that over-harvested

General provisions of Phase One:

1. Following the establishment of a Total Allowable Harvest Level (TAH) and Basic Needs Level (BNL) for each narwhal stock/population and the establishment of corresponding management units based on known summering areas, the BNL for each stock/population will be allocated annually, by the RWO to the Hunter and Trappers Organizations (HTO), in each management unit. The allocation will be in the form of Community Harvest Limits. Depending on whether or not a community harvests from mixed migratory stocks, each community will receive either an All-Season Community Harvest Limit, or a Summer-Season and Migratory-Season Community Harvest Limit. The number of Marine Mammal Tags a community receives will correspond to its Community Harvest Limit(s) (All- Season, Summer-Season and Migratory-Season).
2. A valid Marine Mammal Tag is required to hunt a narwhal.
3. Individual Marine Mammal Tags may only be used to land one narwhal.
4. Marine Mammal Tags may only be used in the harvest season for which they were issued. At the end of the season, any unused tags expire and cannot be used in subsequent years.

¹ These basic transfer provisions will be amended/expanded as required to reflect DFO Science advice on incorporation of mixed stock transfer in phase two and to reflect DFO Science advice on incorporation of a flexible quota system to the tag transfer policy in phase three (see figure 1).

² In the four Baffin Bay management units, stocks are not mixed when whales are in their summering areas. In the Northern Hudson Bay management unit, the stock is not mixed throughout the entire year

5. The transfer of Marine Mammal Tags is not permitted between management units.
6. Transfers of Marine Mammal Tags are subject to RWO(s) pre-approval.
7. Marine Mammal Tag transfers between communities in a management unit are allowed for harvesting when stocks are not mixed, for the purposes identified above (i.e. to cover off an individual community's over-harvest, to maximize harvests or to reconcile over-harvests within the management unit) subject to pre-approval by the RWO(s).
8. Marine Mammal Tag transfers cannot occur once the sum of the Community Harvest Limit(s) (All-Season, Summer-Season) for that management unit in any given harvest season is reached.
9. Marine Mammal Tag transfers cannot occur during the Migratory-Season in any management unit.
10. In the event that insufficient Marine Mammal Tags are available within a management unit for harvest reconciliation, community over-harvests will be reconciled with a compensatory reduction in that HTO's annual Community Harvest Limit (All-Season, Summer-Season) by the RWO for the next narwhal harvest season.
11. Requests for Marine Mammal Tag transfers for any other purposes (e.g. cross-species tag transfers or barter for wildlife products) will be forwarded to the NWMB by the RWO for the management unit for decision on a case-by-case basis as per their authority under NLCA s.5.2.33 (k). Such requests can only be considered if the transfer does not jeopardize the conservation status of the stocks or populations of wildlife in question and does not violate the terms of the management regimes governing the specific wildlife species in question.