

PROPOSAL REVIEW

Project Number: 3-15-04

Applicant: Steve Ferguson

Title: Jones Sound Narwhal Study

Funding Requested: Single Year Funding - \$45,000 for 2015-2016

Rank: 6 / 17

Total Score 77.75 / 100
(2 point deduction)

Scoring Breakdown: NWMB Priority: 17.50 / 17.50
Regional Priority: 7.50 / 7.50
Quality: 23.00 / 35.00
Consultation: 10.50 / 15.00
Funding: 21.25 / 25.00

Project Summary:

This project will use satellite tagging and biological sampling to investigate the stock discreteness and life history habits of narwhal in Jones Sound. The objectives of this project are to: 1) obtain information on the seasonal distribution and diving behaviour of Jones Sound narwhals as it relates to stock identity, climate change, autumn ice entrapments, and wintering area; 2) gather information on the overall health of captured animals and the level of stress during restraint; and 3) determine narwhal diet by analyzing skin and blubber samples.

Project Contributions:

| | | |
|---------------------|-----------------|------------|
| Requested from NWMB | \$ 45,000 | 33% |
| Other Contributions | <u>\$90,000</u> | <u>67%</u> |
| Total | \$135,000 | 100% |

NWMB Staff Evaluation:

NWMB Priority: #1 - Contributes to the establishment, modification or removal of levels of Total Allowable Harvest (S 5.6.16 to S 5.6.18) for stocks or populations where there is believed to be a conservation concern or that are priority species for harvest by Inuit.

Regional Priority: #1 Baffin – Marine mammals: examine the increase in health issues/diseases (e.g. causes).

Project design: The field work will be conducted from May through August 2015 near Grise Fiord. Narwhals, captured by stationary nets attached to the shore, will be restrained for up to 35 minutes while satellite tags are attached and body measurements and skin, blubber and blood samples are collected. During the restraint period heart and breathing rates will be monitored. If an animal appears to be stressed during the restraint it will be released without application of a tag. There is a remote chance that a whale may drown in the net.

Application of results: The study will provide scientific advice on stock identity, migration timing in relation to entrapments, and wintering areas in relation to commercial fishing and industrial activity as well as dive correction factors for aerial survey results. Information

from the narwhal tracking studies will help determine whether the summer aggregation can be designated as a stock unit for management purposes. These results may also aid in providing information necessary to assess maintaining closure of the narwhal winter use area in North Atlantic Fishery Organization Sub-area 0A.

Community involvement / consultation: The Project Leader has requested support from the Iviq (Grise Fiord) Hunters and Trappers Organization. The application indicated that verbal approval of the project has been given but no evidence of support by the Hunters and Trappers Organization has been provided. In-person consultations are planned with the Hunters and Trappers Organization throughout the research and to present the project's results. The project will employ and train 4 to 5 residents of Gris Fiord for a total of 90 person days.

As per the NWRT policy, if the project is funded by the NWRT the researcher is required to: (1) provide a letter of support from all affected communities by June 30th, 2015; **OR** (2) provide a letter of support from a majority of the affected communities by June 30th, 2015 and provide evidence that the researcher has done a "conscientious" job of consulting; **OR** (3) provide the required information to demonstrate that "conscientious" consultation has been conducted by June 30th, 2015.

Recommendations: If this project is funded, the following conditions should apply:

1. Funding should be conditional on meeting the consultation requirements identified as per the NWRT policy.

Prepared By: Danica Crystal, Wildlife Management Biologist, NWMB

Consultations: Karla Letto, Wildlife Management Biologist, NWMB