

PROPOSAL REVIEW

Project Number: 3-15-10

Applicant: Steve Ferguson

Title: Western Hudson Bay Beluga Survey

Funding Requested: Single Year Funding - \$50,000 for 2015-2016

Rank: 17 / 17

Total Score 66.60 /100
(2 point deduction)

Scoring Breakdown: NWMB Priority: 17.50 / 17.50
Regional Priority: 2.50 / 7.50
Quality: 24.50 / 35.00
Consultation: 10.50 / 15.00
Funding: 13.60 / 25.00

Project Summary:

This project aims to update the abundance estimate for Western Hudson Bay belugas by: 1) completing an aerial survey of Western Hudson Bay; 2) analyzing visual survey results using mark-recapture; 3) analyzing photographs to count belugas in high-density areas; 4) analyzing all results to estimate population abundance for Western Hudson Bay belugas; and 5) providing results to communities, scientific journals and the NWMB.

Project Contributions:

Requested from NWMB	\$50,000	19%
Other Contributions	<u>\$210,000</u>	<u>81%</u>
Total	\$260,000	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: #6 Kivalliq – Beluga: establish the distribution, abundance and key habitats.

Project design: In August 2015, four community members will be employed as observers on an aerial survey of Western Hudson Bay. The survey will cover areas surveyed in previous years and areas reported to be used by belugas in the summer based on traditional ecological knowledge and data from satellite tags. Observers will record all whale groups noting the species and number of individuals in the group, as well as the environmental conditions throughout the survey. In estuaries where the densities of whales are too high to count, photographs will be taken by two camera systems and saved on a laptop. A mark-recapture analysis will be used to estimate abundance of whales from visual survey data and all whales will be counted in the photographs and corrected for the animals that were below the surface.

Application of results: Results of this project will help Fisheries and Oceans Canada provide scientific advice on stock size and distribution of Western Hudson Bay beluga.

Results will also help provide science advice on sustainable harvest levels for Western Hudson Bay beluga.

Community involvement / consultation: The project leader has sent a letter to affected Hunters and Trappers Organizations requesting support for this project, however no reply has been received. A presentation and report of the results will be provided to the communities upon completion of the research. This project will employ and train one resident of Arviat for a total of 10 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: Sarah Spencer, Wildlife Management Biologist, NWMB