

Consultations with Hunting and Trapping Organizations on the Baffin Bay Total Allowable Harvest Recommendations

February 3-5, 2018



Department of Environment, Government of Nunavut Iqaluit, Nunavut

Executive Summary

Government of Nunavut, Department of Environment (DOE) representatives conducted consultations with Hunters and Trappers Organizations (HTOs) from February 3-5, 2018 as a second round of consultations. There were preliminary consultations from January 9-15, 2017 to provide co-management partners with an overview of the most recent scientific study results on the Baffin Bay (BB) polar bear sub-population, as well as collect feedback on the results presented and collect additional traditional knowledge (TK). The second round of consultations was to consult on the Total Allowable Harvest (TAH) recommendations from the Canada-Greenland Joint Commission on Polar Bears (JC) following review of the Harvest Risk Assessment Report completed by the Scientific Working Group (SWG). Only the HTOs in communities that hunt from the BB sub-populations were consulted.

The feedback and TK collected during preliminary consultations were considered by the JC when forming Total Allowable Harvest (TAH) recommendations for the Baffin Bay sub-populations. DOE will submit TAH recommendations to the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board (NWMB) for decision.

This report attempts to summarize the comments made by participants during the second round of consultations.

Preface

This report represents the Department of Environment's best efforts to accurately capture all of the information that was shared during consultation meetings with the Hunters and Trappers Organizations of Pond Inlet, Clyde River and Qikiqtarjuaq.

The views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect those of the Department of Environment, or the Government of Nunavut.

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1.0 Report Purpose and Structure

This report is intended to collate and summarize comments, questions, concerns and suggestions provided by the HTOs in response to the JC's TAH recommendations for the BB polar bear subpopulation. Preliminary consultations were conducted with communities to collect feedback and TK prior to forming TAH recommendations for the BB subpopulations. The following communities were consulted from February 3-5, 2018:

- Pond Inlet, February 3, 2018
- Clyde River, February 4, 2018
- Qikiqtarjuaq, February 5, 2018

After the preliminary consultations, the TAH recommendations were discussed and decided by the JC at a meeting in October 2017. The second round of consultations was carried out in the same communities to discuss the recommendations to support the DOE in their submission to the NWMB for decision.

Representatives from the DOE, NWMB, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. (NTI), and the Qikiqtaaluk Wildlife Board (QWB) attended each of the consultations.

2.0 Purpose of Consultations

The preliminary consultations were to discuss the newest information regarding the BB polar bear subpopulation as reported in the scientific study report produced by the Scientific Working Group (SWG). The SWG was created by the JC to collect new scientific data and update the status of the shared subpopulations between Canada/Nunavut and Greenland. After the preliminary consultations and the completion of a Harvest Risk Assessment study by the SWG, the JC met in October 2017 to make TAH recommendations. The purpose of the secondary consultations was to follow up with communities on the TAH recommendations from the JC for the BB polar bear subpopulation.

2.1 Format of Meetings

The meetings were held in the evening or afternoon and ran between 3 to 4 hours depending on HTO engagement. Meetings were facilitated and led by the Senior Manager of Wildlife Operations, Jason Aliqatuqtuq, and the Senior Wildlife Advisor, Caryn Smith. Each consultation started with a presentation on the status of the BB subpopulation and the TAH recommendations (Appendix 1). The participants were invited to ask questions, raise concerns, or provide alternative recommendations throughout the meetings. After the presentation, questions/discussion continued until no further questions were raised.

3.0 Summary by Community

The objectives of the consultations were made clear to the HTO members prior to and at the start of each meeting. There were many similar questions, concerns and suggestions raised by HTO Board members in all the communities consulted. As Grise Fiord was the only community that hunted from the Kane Basin sub-population they did not share some of the concerns raised in the other three communities.

3.1 Pond Inlet

Date: January 3, 2018

Representatives:

- GN-DOE, Senior Manager of Operations: Jason Aliqatuqtuq
- GN-DOE, Senior Wildlife Advisor: Caryn Smith
- GN-DOE, North Baffin Manager: Scott Johnson
- NTI, Biologist Cheryl Wray
- NWMB, Biologist: Denis Ndeloh
- NWMB, Biologist: Kyle Ritchie
- QWB, Board Member: Adamie Nuna
- Mittimatalik HTO Board members
 - Jaykolasie Killiktee
 - Caleb Sangoya
 - Nina Kautuq
 - Billy Merkosak
 - Phaniel Enooagak
 - Tina Enookolo
 - Elijah Panipakoocho

Comments and questions:

The HTO members expressed their concerns about the increased number of polar bears they have to deal with in and around the community. Local polar bear hunters rarely get the chance to go hunting for polar bear due to the fact that most of the bears getting shot are problem bears. The bears that come in and around the community are usually in poor condition and not usually acceptable for consumption. A related concern brought up by the HTO was that they feel Defense of Life and Property Kills (DLPKs) should not require a tag. Caleb Sangoya asked whether the GN was conducting any studies on polar bear prey species. Community members are noticing that the seal population is decreasing. Elijah Panipakoocho explained that polar bears are destroying property and meat caches. The meat caches are important to community members for food security

The HTO board members agreed to consider sending a letter of support to the NWMB before February 23rd so that the NWMB biologist can include it in the package for the March 2018

regular meeting. The board also indicated they would use the letter to express their concerns regarding defense of life and property kills. The HTO feels that the Regional Wildlife Organization should be able to assess the use of tags more than once a year at the annual general meeting. If there is an increase in problem bears they should be able to reduce the number of sport hunts so the tags can be used for DLPKs.

3.2 Clyde River Consultation Summary

Meeting Dates: February 4, 2018

Representatives:

- GN-DOE, Senior Manager of Operations: Jason Aliqatuqtuq
- GN-DOE, Senior Wildlife Advisor: Caryn Smith
- GN-DOE, North Baffin Manager: Scott Johnson
- GN-DOE, Conservation Officer II: Bruce Jerry (BJ) Hainnu
- NTI, Biologist Cheryl Wray
- NWMB, Biologist: Denis Ndeloh
- NWMB, Biologist: Kyle Ritchie
- QWB, Board Member: Adamie Nuna
- Nangmoutaq HTO Board members
 - Mosa Palituq
 - Gordon Kautuk
 - Nysana Qillaq
 - Joasie Etuangat
 - Jaysie Tigullaraq
 - Levi Palituq
 - Lucy Palituq

Comments and questions:

HTO members were concerned about whether they would still be in debt for credits once a new TAH is established. They were informed that all the credits would be zeroed once the new TAH is implemented. The HTO is very strongly opposed to the use of the flexible quota system. They feel as though it benefits the Government of Nunavut but does not benefit the community. There is not a clear understanding of how they are supposed to access the credits they accumulate and the loss of credits due to overharvest hurts the community. It was expressed to the HTO that they could write a letter to the NWMB in order to access credits in subsequent years.

The HTO is also very opposed to the fact that DLPKs require a tag from their TAH allocation. They feel that if a GN employee has to dispatch a bear, the community should not be penalized by losing a tag. They would prefer to see a separate set of tags just for DLPKs. The GN employees suggested to the HTO that they should voice their concerns around the flexible quota system and the DLPKs in a letter to the NWMB and also bring their concerns to the In-Person Public Hearing

for the Draft Polar Bear Management Plan. There was an expression of interest from one of the HTO members to meet face to face with GN to discuss the development of the Draft Polar Bear Management Plan.

The HTO in Clyde River would like to have the three HTOs that hunt from the Baffin Bay polar bear subpopulation meet to discuss their mutual concerns over the flexible quota system and the issues around DLPKs. The GN staff recommended that it would be good to do before the Public Hearing for the Draft Polar Bear Management Plan. Several members of the HTO indicated that they would support the recommended increase in the TAH. They were asked to send a letter or email of support before February 23, 2018 so that it could be included in the next NWMB regular meeting.

3.3 Qikiqtarjuaq Consultation Summary

Date: February 5, 2018

Representatives:

- GN-DOE, Senior Manager of Operations: Jason Aliqatuqtuq
- GN-DOE, Senior Wildlife Advisor: Caryn Smith
- GN-DOE, North Baffin Manager: Scott Johnson
- GN-DOE, Conservation Officer II: Joseph Guay
- NTI, Biologist Cheryl Wray
- NWMB, Biologist: Denis Ndeloh
- NWMB, Biologist: Kyle Ritchie
- QWB, Board Member: Adamie Nuna
- Nattivak HTO Board members
 - Jaypatee Nookiguak
 - Alison Kopalie
 - Juelie Kukuak
 - Joasie Audlakiak
 - Jacepie Audlakiak
 - Uriah Newkingnak

Comments and questions:

The HTO members present were in support of the recommended increase to the TAH and were willing to write a letter of support for the NWMB. The HTO commented that they represent the people of Qikiqtarjuaq and would have to take the recommendations to the community. The HTO asked if there was compensation available for harvesters who have polar bear hides that are still under the trade ban because they were harvested between 2010 and June 2013. There were expressions of concern from the HTO members regarding the sex ratio of the BB subpopulation. They noted that they were worried about the male component of the subpopulation and felt that recruitment would suffer if hunters harvest too many males. The HTO members inquired as to when the next survey for BB would be done and they also indicated that they would prefer the

survey cycle to be shorter. Some HTO members mentioned concerns about what is done with polar bears that are dispatched by the Conservation Officer.

Some community members and HTO members have been noticing more skinny bears in and around the town. Many feel that the skinny bears are older bears that are no longer able to hunt as well due to their age.

As was mentioned in other communities, the Qikiqtarjuaq HTO felt as though it would be beneficial for the three communities that harvest from the BB subpopulation (Pond Inlet, Clyde River, and Qikiqtarjuaq) to get together to discuss what concerns they all share. The staff from the GN pointed out that they could voice their concerns in a letter to the NWMB or during the in-person Public Hearing for the draft Polar Bear Management Plan (date and location TBD).

4.0 Summary

All three HTOs were in favor of the recommended TAH increase as well as the recommended change to the sex ratio of the harvest to a 1:1 harvest (one male for every one female). Each HTO indicated that they would like to consult their communities and the HTO members that were unable to attend the meetings, before submitting a letter to the NWMB indicating their support. Each HTO commented that they would like to see changes to the allocation and management of the polar bear tags. There were also consistent concerns from the communities regarding the flexible quota system and the fact that DLPKs require tags from their tag allocation.



POLAR BEAR HARVEST MANAGEMENT IN BAFFIN BAY



Survey History

- First Population estimate for Baffin Bay (BB) polar bear subpopulation was based on Mark-recapture study conducted from 1981 to 1985. The estimate was between 400-600 bears but the subpopulation boundaries have since changed.
- In 1998, the BB population was estimated to be 2173 bears
- New population estimate is 2826 bears

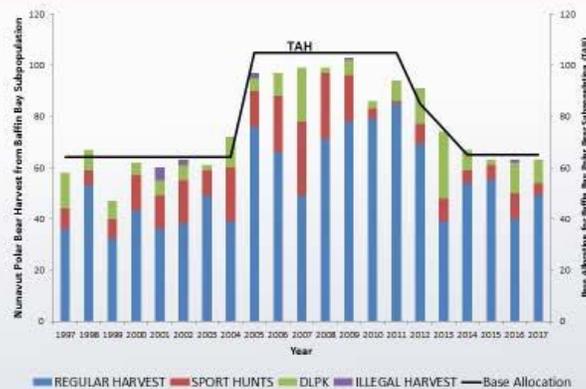


Harvest Management History: Total Allowable Harvest

- In 1996 the Total Allowable Harvest (TAH) was increased to 64 bears.
- In 2004 the TAH was increased to 105 bears following a decision of the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board (NWMB) that reflected the perception from Baffin Bay communities that the population had increased.
- Between 2007 and 2010 there were extensive community consultations and public hearings led by the GN and NWMB to review information and concerns regarding harvesting from BB.
- In 2010 the GN accepted a decision of the NWMB to reduce the annual harvest level in BB by 40 bears with the reduction to be phased in over a 4 year period.

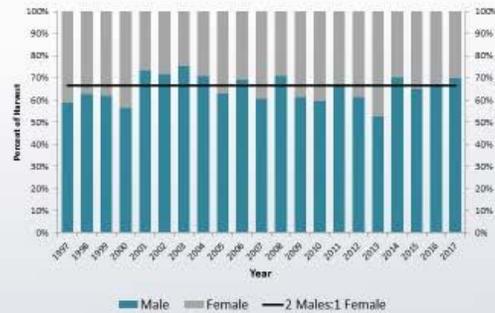


Harvest Management History



Harvest Management History: Sex Ratios

- The harvest sex ratios over the last 20 years (1997-2017) has been very close to 2 males:1 female.



Harvest Management History: Total and Average Harvest

- Harvest for Baffin Bay over the last 20 years (1997-2017):
 - Overall Harvest = **1584** (avg. of 75 bears/year)
 - Regular Harvest = **1136** (avg. of 54 bears/year)
 - Sport Hunting = **254** (avg. of 12 bears/year)
 - Defense of Life and Property Kills = **185** (avg. of 9 bears/year)



Non-Detriment Finding and Lifting of Trade Ban

- Baffin Bay polar bear hides were banned from export out of Nunavut in 2010
- This was due to a trade ban following a Negative Non-Detriment Finding
- The ban resulted from concerns that the combined Nunavut and Greenland harvest was unsustainable and concern that the population was decreasing

- The Negative Non-Detriment Finding was removed in 2017 which resulted in the **trade ban being lifted as of July 1, 2017.**
- Bears harvested from July 2013 to June 2017 were also allowed to enter trade as the most recent population survey results indicated the harvest during that time was sustainable.



Harvest Recommendations from The Joint Commission

- The Canada-Greenland Joint Commission on Polar Bears (JC) met in October 2017
- Results were presented from the Baffin Bay Population study and the Harvest Risk Assessment study, both completed by the Scientific Working Group
 - The Harvest Risk analyses incorporated data including potential effects of future sea-ice conditions, litter sizes, productivity rates and polar bear survival rates
- The Harvest Risk Assessment reported that there was a lowered survival of males and the population was skewed to nearly 70% females. The report emphasized that a depletion of adult males may be an emerging conservation concern.
- The harvest risk analyses indicated that if changes occur in the sea-ice, survival rates (especially those of males), the litter size, or the overall harvest sex ratio between Canada and Greenland, the suggested harvest rate needs to be adjusted downward in order to achieve the management objective.
- The management objective is to maintain a subpopulation size that is in balance with the number of bears the environment can support



Harvest Recommendations from The Joint Commission

- The JC recommendation is to **increase the current Baffin Bay TAH from 65 to 80 bears** annually (Greenland allocation = 80 bears)
- It is recommended that the Baffin Bay Polar Bear harvest sex ratio be **set to a 1:1 ratio** (1 male harvested for every 1 female harvested) due to the concern for potential depletion of the adult male component of the population.
- DOE recommends the flexible quota system use a calculation of removing one male or one female tag for each animal that is harvested over a community tag allocation from the TAH.



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