

SUBMISSION TO THE NUNAVUT WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT BOARD

FOR

Information: X

Decision:

Issue: Consultation regarding the possible addition of the Atlantic Walrus (High Arctic and Central/Low Arctic populations) to the *Species at Risk Act* list

Background

Atlantic Walrus were assessed by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) as a single population of Special Concern in 2006. DFO carried out consultations in Nunavut in 2006 and 2007. None of the 11 Nunavut communities visited supported listing. In April 2017 the Atlantic Walrus was assessed by COSEWIC as two Special Concern populations; a High Arctic and a Central/Low Arctic population. A Nova Scotia-Newfoundland-Gulf of St. Lawrence population, depleted by hunting 150 years ago, was assessed as Extirpated. Existing Atlantic Walrus populations may be limited or threatened by hunting, noise disturbance and industrial activities. Their narrow ecological niche also makes them vulnerable to environmental changes.

The full COSEWIC assessment report for the Atlantic Walrus (High Arctic and Central/Low Arctic populations) is available (in English) on the Species at Risk Public Registry at:

http://www.sararegistry.gc.ca/virtual_sara/files/cosewic/sr_Atlantic%20Walrus_2017_e.pdf

Consultations

DFO recently mailed and emailed a request to 23 Hunters and Trappers Organizations (HTOs) in Nunavut to ask them if they wanted to be consulted about the possible listing of Atlantic Walrus. Four HTOs, Grise Fiord, Pond Inlet, Clyde River and Cape Dorset, stated they wished to receive consultation materials. Two HTOs, Cambridge Bay and Kugluktuk, due to their communities being outside the normal range of Atlantic Walrus, declined the consultation. However, due to the recognized importance of the species to Inuit and its widespread distribution in Nunavut, DFO will send consultation materials to all HTOs, excluding the two that stated they did not want materials. We believe including all HTOs in the distribution of consultation materials is proper for a thorough consultation on this species. Once they have the materials in hand, HTOs can then provide a decision on listing or decline to participate.

Listing of Atlantic Walrus as a species of Special Concern would not result in any changes to their management or the current hunting by Inuit, but would require the creation of a SARA management plan or SARA compliant management plans. At this time, we suspect that the recently completed Integrated Fisheries Management Plan for Atlantic Walrus in Nunavut would form a large portion of any SARA management plan.

All consultation materials will be prepared in English and Inuktitut and distributed to HTOs and other Inuit organizations prior to the official consultation period. The planned consultation period for Walrus will begin in September 2018 and run for 90 days, coinciding with a similar consultation period in southern Canada. Public notices will appear in *Nunatsiaq News* just after the consultation period has begun to advise the public of the consultation period so that all Nunavut residents have an opportunity to participate in the process using online materials. A reminder letter will be sent to HTOs and stakeholders part way through the consultation period to remind them we are looking for their views on listing.

As per the “Memorandum of Understanding to Harmonize the Designation of Rare, Threatened and Endangered Species under the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement and the Listing of Wildlife Species at Risk under the *Species at Risk Act*”, DFO will forward a consultation summary to the Board once consultations have been completed.

Prepared by:

Sam Stephenson, Species at Risk Biologist, DFO, Central and Arctic Region, Winnipeg

Date: 01 August 2018