

# **SUBMISSION TO THE NUNAVUT WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT BOARD**

**FOR**

**Information:**

**Decision: X**

**Issue:** A decision is needed to approve/not approve the Blue Whale (*Balaenoptera musculus*) (Northwest Atlantic population) Action Plan.

**Background:**

The Blue Whale (Northwest Atlantic population) was assessed by the Committee of the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) as an Endangered species in 2002 and added to the List of Wildlife Species at Risk List in 2005. The NWMB was notified of the COSEWIC assessment and asked to make a decision on listing in 2004. The NWMB was also asked about and approved a Recovery Strategy in 2007 which was made official in 2010. As an Endangered species, the requirement under the *Species at Risk Act* calls for the creation of an Action Plan within five years of listing.

Article 5.2.34 (d) (i) of the Nunavut Agreement states that the NWMB shall, at its discretion, approve plans for management, classification, protection, restocking or propagation, cultivation or husbandry of particular wildlife, including endangered species. Details of how to achieve approval of management plans, recovery strategies and action plans are not addressed under the 2008 "*A memorandum of understanding to harmonize the designation of rare, threatened and endangered species under the Nunavut Lands Claim Agreement and the listing of wildlife species under the Species at Risk Act*".

The Blue Whale (Northwest Atlantic population) Action Plan (Executive Summary attached and translated into Inuktitut) outlines what needs to be done to begin or further support the strategic direction set out in the Recovery Strategy. As the Blue Whale is a rare visitor to Nunavut waters, no work has been carried out in this area and none is planned. The Action Plan outlines what needs to be done in areas most frequented by Blue Whale. As part of the process in creating an Action Plan, the NWMB is requested to review this final document, provide any comments, and state whether they approve of this action plan.

This document was originally brought to the Board in March 2016, at which time the Board requested that review not occur until the document was considered final. The document is now considered final.

On September 11, 2019, the Blue Whale Action Plan was brought before the Board. The Board did not approve the Action Plan at that time as there was a concern that some HTOs near where Blue Whale might appear could have comments. DFO sent copies of the Action Plan to six communities inquiring about their interest in Blue Whale and to seek comment on the plan asking for a response by November 25, 2019. Despite

the attempts, only two HTOs responded and both said they did not see Blue Whale and therefore had no comment (see Annex 1). In checking to see if the commercial fishing industry had provided any comment on the Action Plan when originally prepared, we found that even in areas where Blue Whale are common there were no comments from the industry, suggesting there are no concerns from that sector.

**Recommendations:**

The NWMB review the updated action plan for Blue Whale (Northwest Atlantic population), provide any comments to DFO and its decision.

**Prepared by:**

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**Date:**

16 January 2020

**Annex 1 – Results of contact with Hunters and Trappers Organizations regarding the Action Plan for Blue Whale**

**CONTACT WITH HTOs:**

**October 9, 2019** – Express Post letter with information on the Blue Whale Action Plan (complete English Action Plan, translated Executive Summary, and letter [English and Inuktitut]) sent to Kimmirut, Iqaluit, Pangnirtung, Qikiqtarjuaq, Clyde River and Pond Inlet HTOs. According to Canada Post, all delivered by October 17<sup>th</sup>.

**October 28, 2019** – Email reminder, with original materials attached, to all HTOs about DFO request for action on Blue Whale Action Plan

**November 20-21** – Phone calls to HTOs with messages left for **Iqaluit, Kimmirut and Pond Inlet**. None of these communities provided comments to DFO.

**Clyde River HTO:** Stated that they do not see Blue Whales, so they had no comment.

**Pangnirtung HTO:** No comment as they do not see Blue Whales.

**Qikiqtarjuaq HTO:** On November 21, the person answering the phone commented she was unsure if they had received the materials or not, so I re-emailed them. Two later phone calls were not answered.