

SUBMISSION TO THE
NUNAVUT WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT BOARD
June 2020

FOR

Information: X

Decision:

Issue: Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) Initial Response to the Qikiqtaaluk Wildlife Board's (QWB) Request for Decision titled "Amendment of Narwhal Summer-Stock Harvest Management for Baffin Island, 2020"

Background

The QWB has submitted a Request for Decision for consideration by the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board (NWMB or Board) at its Regular Meeting 002-2020 on June 10, 2020.

NWMB staff requested DFO's written response to the QWB submission to inform discussion at the Regular Meeting. DFO was not aware of the QWB's planned submission in advance of the submission deadline. It is also unclear whether other co-management organizations were provided advance notice of this submission or were advised thereafter. DFO would like to thank the NWMB for the opportunity to provide this information note summarizing some initial observations to assist the Board's consideration of the QWB's proposal.

In DFO's view, the QWB's Request for Decision was submitted in a manner that is inconsistent with the NWMB's Governance Manual. Section 4.3 (Procedural Fairness) notes that the NWMB is subject to administrative law and its decisions are made using procedures that are fair to the affected parties. These include that the parties be provided timely notice, reasonable disclosure, and adequate opportunity to respond before a decision is made affecting their interests or rights. Section 4.4 (Proposal for Decision) lists five specific elements that are to be included in Requests for NWMB Decision, three of which do not appear in the QWB submission. The QWB did not include the relevant western scientific information [some of which includes available Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit (IQ)] related to its proposal, did not consult with DFO as a key co-management organization prior to proposal submission, and requests prompt attention by the NWMB without addressing the NWMB's planned review of the Integrated Fisheries Management Plan (IFMP) for narwhal in the Nunavut Settlement Area.

Information

In 2013, the NWMB and DFO approved the narwhal IFMP that resulted from significant public consultations and included, where available, the input of IQ. It includes information about the fishery and the allocation system that accounts for harvests from migratory herds of mixed stocks of Baffin Bay narwhal. In 2017, the NWMB modified the Total Allowable Harvest (TAH) for Somerset Island, East Baffin Island, Jones Sound, and Smith Sound stocks. The community allocations following this modification were agreed to by co-management partners at a 2018 allocation workshop held in Rankin Inlet. The decision-making process for Admiralty Inlet and Eclipse Sound stocks is currently adjourned until additional science advice is published on the connectivity of those two stocks.

As noted by the QWB, the IFMP states that the NWMB would review the narwhal management system after the 2017 harvesting season. From the 2013 Narwhal IFMP: “In addition to the annual post season reviews, the NWMB will conduct a formal review of the levels of TAH, the narwhal management system based on summering stocks, and the overall Integrated Fisheries Management Plan in five years (following the 2017 harvesting season)”. However, at a 2018 meeting in Iqaluit, the narwhal co-management organizations (including the QWB) agreed that the NWMB’s review of the IFMP would occur when DFO Science advice was available regarding the connectivity of the Admiralty Inlet and Eclipse Sound management units. Science advice regarding the connectivity of those two stocks is expected in 2020. It would be premature to amend the narwhal management system ahead of this planned IFMP review and the publication of DFO Science advice for Admiralty Inlet and Eclipse Sound.

DFO Recommendation

The NWMB may wish to consider deferring the QWB’s Request for Decision until the DFO Science advice is available to inform the NWMB’s formal review of the IFMP as outlined in the 2013 Narwhal IFMP and subsequent amendments approved by the Board. This recommendation is based on the following:

1. Sufficient lead time for the narwhal co-management organizations to prepare formal positions for discussion, consistent with the Nunavut Agreement decision-making process. This approach ensures that potential revisions to the narwhal management regime are discussed in a collaborative and inclusive manner.
2. The 2020/21 narwhal hunting season is currently underway and any changes to the current management system would not be possible without significant delays, which may restrict harvesting opportunities for communities.
3. The timelines anticipated to schedule and conduct a public hearing, and to complete the Nunavut Agreement decision-making process on the matter, will also determine when potential changes in narwhal management can be implemented.
4. Lack of evidence that the QWB has discussed its proposal with the Kitikmeot Regional Wildlife Board, Kivalliq Wildlife Board, and their constituent communities.
5. The QWB does not address the potential implications of its proposal to international trade in narwhal products, which is regulated by the Committee on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). If the current management system is changed, then international trade in narwhal products will depend on positive assessment from Canada’s CITES Scientific Authority.

DFO representatives (Resource Management and Science Sectors) remain available to assist the NWMB upon request.

Prepared by: DFO Resource Management & DFO Science

Date: June 01, 2020