

SUBMISSION TO THE
NUNAVUT WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT BOARD
December 2021

FOR

Information: X

Decision:

Issue: Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) – Fisheries Management Operational Updates

Updates:

Marine Mammals:

1) Narwhal:

- The total reported landings for Narwhal management units in the 2020/21 harvest season were: Jones Sound 38, Smith Sound 0, Northern Hudson Bay 184, Somerset Island 74, East Baffin Island 178, Admiralty Inlet 312, and Eclipse Sound 140.
- All of the 2021/22 narwhal tags (including carry-over tags) and information packages have been distributed to all harvesting communities in coordination with the Regional Wildlife Organizations (RWOs).
- DFO Fisheries Management provided briefing notes to the Kivalliq Wildlife Board (KWB), Kitikmeot Regional Wildlife Board (KRWB), and Qikiqtaaluk Wildlife Board (QWB) to be presented at their 2021 Annual General Meetings on the available information for the 2021/22 narwhal harvest season and discussed planning for the 2022/23 season.
- In mid-August 2021, the Mittimatalik Hunters and Trappers Organization (MHTO) of Pond Inlet reported low numbers of narwhal observed in Eclipse Sound, and asked DFO if Eclipse Sound Marine Mammal Tags (MMTs) could be used in the Admiralty Inlet management unit. The Narwhal Integrated Fisheries Management Plan (IFMP) specifies that stock-specific MMTs are not to be used elsewhere; additionally the Ikajutit HTO (Arctic Bay) did not support MHTO's request to harvest narwhal in Admiralty Inlet. DFO was advised that the MHTO members would not harvest narwhal in Admiralty Inlet.
- DFO continues to attempt coordination of a virtual meeting for the Nunavut Narwhal Working Group in 2021 at a time when all co-management organizations are available to participate. This meeting will involve discussing the recently published Science advice on Admiralty Inlet and Eclipse Sound narwhal stocks and initiating a review of the Integrated Fisheries Management Plan for Narwhal in the Nunavut Settlement Area, including the collective review of and potential changes to narwhal management in

Nunavut. DFO is currently proposing November 30, 2021 for this meeting, pending availability of co-management organizations.

2) Walrus:

- The total reported landings for walrus within the Nunavut Settlement Area for the 2020/21 season was 257, with all being harvested for subsistence purposes and none being harvested by sport hunters. However, a few communities did not report any subsistence harvest.
- In 2021, DFO and the Sanirajak Hunters and Trappers Association (HTA) and the Aiviit Hunters and Trappers Organization (HTO) of Coral Harbour continued the Community-Based Catch Monitoring Program for Walrus. Community Coordinators were hired in both communities for the 2021 harvest season to implement the program. DFO continues to work closely with the HTA/HTO Managers and Community Coordinators to obtain updates on the 2021 walrus harvest in these two communities.
- Of the 27 walrus sport hunts approved by the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board (NWMB) and DFO for 2021, five sport hunts occurred. Several other hunts were planned but did not occur for various reasons, with COVID-19 travel restrictions playing a role in some hunt cancellations. DFO continues to coordinate with outfitters on receipt of samples and harvest information from successful hunts.
- Due to COVID-19 and ongoing public health measures, no face-to-face meetings are planned at this time but a virtual Nunavut Walrus Working Group meeting will be proposed in the near future. Items for discussion by co-management organizations include the possible alternatives to Total Allowable Harvest (TAH) levels for walrus in Nunavut, the walrus sport hunt and potential solutions to ensure access for outfitters, and ongoing implementation of the walrus IFMP.

3) Beluga:

- The total reported landings for beluga within the Nunavut Settlement Area for the 2020/21 season was 350. However, a few communities did not report their beluga harvest.
- The Cumberland Sound Beluga Working Group continues to meet virtually while COVID-19 restrictions limit in-person meetings. In 2021, virtual meetings were held in January, February, March, June, and October. During these meetings, the Working Group Terms of Reference and the Communications Plan were completed. The next virtual meeting is being tentatively planned for late November.

4) Bowhead:

- DFO engaged communities about conducting a Bowhead Working Group meeting this fall. Response was limited, so DFO is planning to hold a virtual meeting of the Bowhead Working Group in the near future to continue to

engage on the development of the bowhead IFMP. In-person meetings will resume as soon as it is safe to do so.

5) Killer Whale – Northwest Atlantic/ Eastern Arctic (NWA/EA) Population

- The community of Pangnirtung and the QWB have each notified DFO of an increase in the presence of killer whales in Cumberland Sound, and concerns about killer whale predation on other marine mammals in the area. The Pangnirtung HTO wishes to explore licensing options for local management of this killer whale population through harvesting.
- The NWMB received a copy of DFO's written response to the HTO (September 2, 2021) which summarized two possible options and asked the HTO to provide more details required to inform next steps. On October 25, 2021 DFO provided additional information to partners regarding contaminant levels in North Atlantic killer whales sampled in Greenland and Norway, in response to a request regarding food safety. Additionally, a DFO science analysis of polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) concentrations and diet characteristics of High Arctic killer whales sampled between 2009-2019 is underway. Publication is anticipated in the coming months and can be provided at that time to further inform the community and partners on the health of this population.
- NWMB staff attended two recent co-management calls on the subject. The first was held on October 14, 2021 to discuss killer whales in Cumberland Sound and to clarify requests, roles, and responsibilities of the co-management groups involved. The second was the Cumberland Sound Beluga Working Group (CSB-WG) meeting held on October 15, 2021. Discussions were focused on the concerns and impacts of killer whales on CSB and the community. Both meetings were also attended by Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. (NTI), the QWB, the Pangnirtung HTO, and DFO.
- DFO looks forward to the continued engagement of the NWMB, Regional Wildlife Organizations, and other partners in identifying possible approaches to address killer whale predation on traditional Inuit food sources, while accounting for additional important considerations such as alignment with Inuit Qaujimaqatuqangit and local knowledge of killer whale behaviour; available scientific information on NWA/EA killer whale population; harvest plans that address human safety, processing and use of killer whale carcasses, and scientific sample collection; success of predator-control measures for killer whale; and potential implications of existing trade agreements.

6) Harvest Reporting:

- Staff from the Iqaluit DFO office will soon be in contact with HTOs/HTAs requesting mid-season harvest updates for beluga, walrus, and narwhal. Reports of total marine mammal hunting mortality (landed and lost) are essential to develop reliable advice on sustainable harvests.
- DFO urges continued reporting of unusual marine mammal occurrences and events for follow up by co-management organizations, such as beached

- carcasses and ice entrapments.
- Timely and accurate reporting is required under the Fisheries Act, Marine Mammal Regulations, and the Nunavut Agreement. It is strongly recommended that co-management organizations emphasize the importance of harvest reporting and monitoring.

Arctic Char:

1) Pangnirtung:

- In 2020/21, a total of approximately 17,900 kg of Arctic char was reported harvested in Pangnirtung.
- For 2021/22, the Arctic char summer fishery in Cumberland Sound opened on July 28, 2021 and ran for about three weeks. Approximately 42 fishers participated in the summer fishery and fished 12 waterbodies.
- Approximately 17,300 kg round weight of char was landed at the Pangnirtung fish plant in the summer of 2021.
- Additional char fishing in Cumberland Sound is expected to occur during the upcoming winter season.

2) Kivalliq:

- The 2021 commercial harvest of Arctic char in the Kivalliq region was approximately 13,300 lbs, harvested from around Rankin Inlet and Whale Cove.
- The commercial plant sampling program once again occurred in 2021 thanks to the ongoing support of Kivalliq Arctic Foods. This program aims to collect biological data from commercially harvested char in the region. Specific sample sizes per location will be determined when all samples are shipped to Winnipeg.
- A community based sampling program including six communities (Baker Lake, Chesterfield Inlet, Coral Harbour, Naujaat, Rankin Inlet, and Whale Cove) was established in 2019. Due to the interest and success in 2019, the programs have continued into 2020 and 2021 focusing on different communities. These community based sampling programs support the objectives outlined by the Kivalliq communities at the 2019 and 2020 Kivalliq Arctic Char Workshops. The aim of the programs is to collect samples that will be used to understand diet and parasites of Arctic char in the region.
- In 2021, local fishers collected 50 samples per waterbody from eight waterbodies around Naujaat and Sanirajak areas. DFO is covering payments to local fishers for the collection of these samples.

3) Cambridge Bay:

- The NWMB and DFO have formally approved the 2021 updated Cambridge Bay Arctic char IFMP, including the use of weirs as a modification of a Non-Quota Limitation for Jayko and Halokvik Rivers and the use of a weir spanning the whole width of the river at Halokvik river. The IFMP will be posted online this year and copies will be made available in Inuinnaqtun, Inuktitut, English, and French.
- The 2021 commercial harvest of Arctic char in Cambridge Bay occurred at three sites [Ekalluk, Halokvik (30-Mile), and Jayko Rivers]. Lauchlan and Surrey Rivers were not harvested due to availability of float planes during the spring harvest.

- A total of 30,186 kg was harvested in 2021, reflecting 71.9% of the targeted harvest and 47% of the total commercial quota for the five waterbodies. There are no conservation concerns with any of the waterbodies.

Fishery Site (Common Name)	Commercial Quota Kg, round weight	Targeted Commercial Quota Kg, Round weight	2021 Commercial Harvest Kg, round weight
Ekalluktok (Ekalluk River)	20,000	20,000	14,803.08
Halokvik (30 Mile)	5,000	5,000	4,998.68
Jayko	17,000	17,000	6,616.18
Paliryuak (Surrey River)	9,100	Not Fished	Not Fished
Lauchlan R. (Byron Bay)	9,100 (*5,000)	Not fished	Not fished
Grand Total	60,200	42,000	30,186

* targeted quota

- There will be a virtual post-season fishing meeting scheduled with the IFMP Working Group in the near future.
- The Cambridge Bay commercial plant sampling program (fishery-dependent sampling) was once again successful in providing DFO with biological data and samples from 200 Arctic char from the three bodies that were commercially fished. This is the longest running program of its kind in Nunavut, spanning five decades.
- As a result of travel restrictions due to COVID-19, DFO did not conduct fishery-independent sampling of Lauchlan River Arctic char as initially planned. DFO had planned to continue the Lauchlan River sampling (year 3 of 5) in 2021, collecting biological data that will be important for completing a stock assessment of the health of the Lauchlan River fishery. Instead, DFO initiated a community-based sampling program in 2021 at an area near to the community, locally known as Gravel Pit. Local field assistants, hired through the EHTO, fished for Arctic char and took biological samples throughout the summer. The primary objective was to assess how char diet might change throughout the marine feeding season and to collect samples for contaminants, parasites, and marine microplastics work. These are topics of interest for community members that DFO has heard during recent engagements. In 2021, 151 samples were collected through this initiative. Analyses will begin this winter.
- Loosened travel restrictions did allow for a shortened field season towards the end of August. During this time, the majority of our acoustic equipment that has been monitoring char migrations since 2013 was recovered. This equipment was not redeployed, given all the uncertainties with field seasons as of late. The goal is to establish a telemetry study monitoring movements and habitat use of char, lake trout, ogacs, and kanayoks near Cambridge Bay and in the Greiner watershed.

Greenland Halibut (Turbot):

1) Cumberland Sound Turbot Management Area (CSTMA)

- Open water turbot fishing occurred in Cumberland Sound in the summer of 2021 from late July until early September. Between the on-ice fishery during the winter and this open water summer fishery, approximately 456.25 t out of the 500 t TAH was landed in 2021.

Prepared by: Fisheries Management, Arctic Region – Fisheries and Oceans Canada

Date: October 28, 2021