

**SUBMISSION TO THE**  
**NUNAVUT WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT BOARD**  
**NOVEMBER 2022**

**FOR**

**Information: X**

**Decision:**

**Issue:** Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada – Fisheries Management Operational Updates

**Updates:**

**Marine Mammals:**

- 1) Narwhal
  - The total reported landings for Narwhal management units in the 2021/22 harvest season were: Jones Sound 10, Smith Sound 0, Northern Hudson Bay 115, Somerset Island 78, East Baffin Island 102, Admiralty Inlet 185, and Eclipse Sound 162.
  - This spring, DFO and Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated (NTI) co-chaired three Narwhal Working Group meetings (March 2, April 21, and May 12) to explore different seasonal harvest scenarios for the Baffin Bay narwhal population in 2022/23 that are consistent with the current narwhal management regime. Despite multiple meetings and a variety of scenarios proposed, there was no consensus among co-management organizations this year. Since an agreement could not be reached among Working Group members, and to avoid harvesting delays to affected communities, DFO applied the same allocations and season dates used in 2021. 2022/23 narwhal tags (including carry-over tags) and information packages were distributed to all harvesting communities in the spring/summer of 2022.
  - DFO recognizes that the 2013 Narwhal Integrated Fisheries Management Plan (IFMP) is past due for a formal review and acknowledges the importance of updating the IFMP incorporating all available knowledge, including Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit. The Department remains committed to organizing virtual and face-to-face meetings of the Narwhal Working Group to continue the review of the Narwhal IFMP and explore issues co-management organizations deem relevant to narwhal management. We would appreciate hearing from co-managers as to convenient dates for the next Working Group meeting.
  - DFO Fisheries Management provided briefing notes to the Kitikmeot Regional Wildlife Board (KRWB) and Qikiqtaaluk Wildlife Board (QWB) to be presented at

their 2022 Annual General Meetings on the available information for the 2021/22 narwhal harvest season and discussed planning for the 2022/23 season. A similar briefing note has not yet been provided to the Kivalliq Wildlife Board (KWB), as they indicated they will be holding a meeting to discuss wildlife management at a later date.

- In planning for the 2023/24 harvest season, it is very important that Hunters and Trappers Organizations/Associations (HTOs/HTAs) return both the used and unused tags from 2022/23 along with the Narwhal HTO Harvest Sheet by the close of the season (March 31, 2023). Carry-over allocations cannot be finalised until the harvest information from the previous season is returned and analysed by DFO. Prior to distributing the 2023 harvest tags, 2022 harvest data will be reconciled, carry-over allocations will be calculated, and community allocations will be sought from Regional Wildlife Organizations (RWOs).

## 2) Walrus

- The total reported landings for walrus within the Nunavut Settlement Area for the 2021/22 season was 93 harvested for subsistence and 5 harvested by sport hunters. However, numerous communities did not provide a report of subsistence harvest.
- In 2022, the Community-Based Catch Monitoring Program for Walrus continued in Sanirajak, Coral Harbour, and Igloolik. The program was also expanded to Nauyasat for the first time. Community Coordinators were hired in all four communities for the 2022 harvest season to support program delivery in the community and increase capacity at the local HTO/HTA. The Community Coordinator spreads awareness about the DFO Science sample kit program and encourages hunters to report their harvest to the HTO/HTA. DFO continues to work closely with the HTO/HTA Managers and Community Coordinators to obtain updates on the 2022 walrus harvest in these two communities.
- Of the 64 walrus sport hunts approved by the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board (NWMB) and DFO for 2022, 40 walrus sport hunt licences were issued and DFO has received reports from 12 of these hunts. DFO staff will continue to follow up with sport hunt outfitters to ensure receipt of reporting information and biological samples in the coming months.

## 3) Beluga

- The total reported landings for beluga within the Nunavut Settlement Area for the 2021/22 season was 324. However, numerous communities did not provide a report of harvests in 2021/22.
- The Cumberland Sound Beluga Working Group continues to meet virtually while COVID-19 impacts the ability to hold in-person meetings. During the June 28,

2022 Working Group meeting, the Pangnirtung HTO identified that they want to have an Inuit focused meeting to discuss a management plan for Cumberland Sound Beluga. The HTO requested that QWB coordinate this meeting. The Working Group agreed to wait to host the next Working Group meeting until after this QWB-led meeting was held. To date, there has been no communication with DFO about the status of the Inuit management meeting.

#### 4) Bowhead

##### A) Harvest

- The Total Allowable Harvest of Eastern Arctic-West Greenland bowhead whales in Nunavut is 5 per year (Qikiqtaaluk 2, Kivalliq 2, Kitikmeot 1). Following the approval of hunt plans by RWOs and penitence training by NTI, DFO issued licences for the 2022 bowhead hunts in the Qikiqtaaluk and Kivalliq regions.
- Both Qikiqtaaluk hunts and the hunt in Rankin Inlet were successful in landing a whale. At the time this briefing note was written, Coral Harbour had not yet provided a report on the outcome of this year's hunt. The Kitikmeot regional hunt in Taloyoak was cancelled due to inclement weather.
- Sample kits were provided by DFO Science to all communities. DFO will continue to follow up with communities in the coming months to ensure receipt of harvest information and biological samples.

##### B) Management Plan

- On November 9, 2021, DFO met informally with available Bowhead Working Group members and RWO technical staff. Representatives from Nunavut (KRWB, KWB, NWMB, and NTI) and Nunavik (Nunavik Marine Region Wildlife Board, Makivik) were present. Since not all members were available, the objective was to introduce new members to each other and think about potential approaches to resuming our joint revision of the existing draft bowhead management plan.
- Since that time, turnover of key DFO file leads in 2022 made workload adjustments necessary. As a result, work activities related to the bowhead management plan were postponed until later this winter. DFO Winnipeg staff will circulate a status update to Working Group members in December.

#### 5) 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. Timely and accurate reporting is required under the *Fisheries Act*, *Marine Mammal Regulations*, and the *Nunavut Agreement*.

- 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.

### **Arctic Char**

#### 1) Pangnirtung:

- In 2021/22, a total of approximately 19,585 kg of Arctic char was reported harvested in Cumberland Sound.
- For 2022/23, the Arctic char summer fishery in Cumberland Sound opened on July 29<sup>th</sup> and ran until mid-September. DFO Fisheries Management staff were unfortunately unable to fly to Pangnirtung to assist with the opening of the fishery and meet with fishers due to inclement weather, but DFO Science staff were in the community and assisted with the fishery opening. DFO FM staff worked closely with the Pangnirtung HTO and Pangnirtung fish plant prior to and during the fishery to ensure the fishery ran smoothly and to monitor the harvest at each waterbody.
- Approximately 24 fishers participated in the summer fishery and fished 12 waterbodies, with a total of approximately 17,870 kg round weight of char landed at the Pangnirtung fish plant in the summer of 2022.
- Additional char fishing in Cumberland Sound is expected to occur during the upcoming winter season.

#### 2) Kivalliq:

- In 2022/23, the Arctic char commercial summer fishery in the Kivalliq region was approximately 8,000 kg, harvested from the Rankin Inlet and Whale Cove areas.
- The commercial plant sampling program once again occurred in 2022 thanks to the ongoing support of Kivalliq Arctic Foods with the aim of collecting biological data from commercially harvested char in the region. Specific sample sizes per location will be determined when all samples are shipped to Winnipeg in the coming weeks.
- A community-based sampling program began in 2019 and has continued into 2022, with local fishers collecting 50 samples per waterbody from four waterbodies around Naujaat. The aim of this program is to collect samples that will be used to understand diet and parasites of Arctic char in the region. The last set of samples will be assessed for diet and parasites and the results of this work will be summarized in community reports and primary publications.
- DFO is hosting another Kivalliq char workshop involving members from all Kivalliq HTOs and is being planned for February 14-16, 2023 in Rankin Inlet. The objective of this workshop is to identify new and emerging research priorities and management concerns. The findings from the workshop will be used to guide future char research in the region.

#### 3) Cambridge Bay:

- The Cambridge Bay IFMP Working Group met in person in Cambridge Bay in June 2022 for its annual meeting to review the IFMP and to discuss the operation of the fishery.
- Commercial harvest in 2022 was planned for 4 sites [Ekalluk, Halokvik (30-Mile), Jayko and Surrey]. Fishing was attempted at Surrey, but no fish were caught.
- A total of 38,241 kg (round weight) or 83% of targeted quota was harvested. Daily reporting and quota management is completed by Kitikmeot Foods Ltd. (KFL) to ensure there is no over-harvest. Fishers are provided with logbooks before the start of fishing to record catch-per-unit effort, bycatch, and discard information.
- The commercial plant sampling program in 2022 was once again successful in providing DFO with fishery-dependent biological data and samples from 200 Arctic char from three of the four locations that were commercially fished.
- Fishery-independent sampling occurred this summer at Ekalluk River and Gravel Pit, but only 60 samples were collected in total due to poor weather and high winds. The goal is to transition the fishery-independent sampling program from the Lauchlan River to the Ekalluk River moving forward as KFL has indicated their plan to no longer harvest Arctic char at Lauchlan River due to the distance from the community and the small quota available at that location.
- There will be a post-season fishing meeting scheduled with the IFMP Working Group in the near future.
- DFO is planning to host a Kitikmeot Arctic char Workshop in Cambridge Bay with representatives from each Kitikmeot HTO, the KRWB, Government of Nunavut, NWMB, and others. The goal of the workshop will be to discuss community and regional priorities around the development of Arctic char fisheries. This meeting is being planned for January 2023 with the assistance of the KRWB.

### **Greenland Halibut (Turbot):**

- 1) Cumberland Sound Turbot Management Area (CSTMA):
  - DFO FM staff met with the Pangnirtung HTO in-person in May 2022 to discuss both Arctic char and Greenland halibut fisheries in Cumberland Sound to re-engage after travel restrictions prevented in-person visits for several years. Topics discussed included HTO priorities, licence conditions, and logbooks. DFO staff look forward to continued in-person visits to Pangnirtung to collaborate on sustainable management of these commercial fisheries.
  - Following an absence of on-ice winter turbot fishing in Cumberland Sound earlier this year, DFO issued a licence in late June for open-water summer turbot fishing in Cumberland Sound. To date, no landings have occurred at the Pangnirtung fish plant.

### **Fish Stocks Provisions**

- DFO is seeking feedback on a proposal for a regulatory amendment to the *Fishery (General) Regulations* (FGR) to list the second batch of major fish stocks that would be subject to the Fish Stocks provisions (sections 6.1-6.3) of the *Fisheries Act*. This regulatory amendment would see the addition of 62 fish stocks to Schedule IX of the FGR. Schedule IX currently contains 30 fish stocks. DFO (Arctic Region) fisheries that are proposed for listing in the second batch are Arctic Char stocks in Cambridge Bay and Cumberland Sound.
- The Fish Stocks provisions include obligations to maintain major fish stocks prescribed by regulation at levels necessary to promote their sustainability (s. 6.1); and to develop and implement rebuilding plans for stocks that have declined to or below their limit reference point (s. 6.2). The DFO website contains some additional useful information about the Fish Stocks provisions and can be accessed at <https://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/about-notre-sujet/engagement/2022/fish-stock-provisions-dispositions-stocks-poissons-eng.html>.
- Feedback or questions on the proposed amendments can be sent to: [DFO.Rebuilding-Retablissement.MPO@dfo-mpo.gc.ca](mailto:DFO.Rebuilding-Retablissement.MPO@dfo-mpo.gc.ca) prior to December 19, 2022 or by contacting DFO's regional coordinator, Adrienne McLean, at [Adrienne.McLean@dfo-mpo.gc.ca](mailto:Adrienne.McLean@dfo-mpo.gc.ca) prior to March 1, 2023. DFO will be sharing this information and seeking feedback from additional co-management organizations in the near future.
- Seeking feedback on this proposed regulatory amendment is a step in the regulatory process as described in the [Cabinet Directive on Regulation](#). This regulatory process will provide another opportunity to submit feedback on the proposed amendment containing the proposed list of fish stocks, once the draft regulation is published in Canada Gazette, Part I. Currently there is no timeline for that publication step.

### **U.S. Marine Mammal Protection Act Import Provisions**

- On October 20, 2022, the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) announced an additional one-year extension to foreign nations to receive a comparability finding for their commercial fishing operations to export fish and fish products to the United States – a revision to the regulations implementing the import provisions of the U.S. Marine Mammal Protection Act.
- With this extension, nations will have until December 31, 2023 to receive a comparability finding for their commercial fishing operations in order to export fish and fish products to the United States.
- The Import Provisions regulations, published in 2016, provided foreign nations a five-year exemption period to develop, as appropriate, regulatory programs governing the bycatch of marine mammals that are comparable in effectiveness

to U.S. regulations. NOAA previously extended the exemption period for an additional year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- NOAA is reviewing comparability finding applications from more than 130 nations representing more than 2,500 exempt and export fisheries. NOAA has indicated that it needs additional time to review and evaluate these applications, correspond with nations, make its final determination, and notify nations of its findings. These comparability findings are important because they ensure that foreign nations' bycatch programs meet U.S. standards as a condition to allow import of the fish and fish products from these fisheries.
- NOAA's official post "Modification of Deadlines Under the Fish and Fish Product Import Provisions of the Marine Mammal Protection Act" can be accessed at the following link: <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2022/10/21/2022-22965/modification-of-deadlines-under-the-fish-and-fish-product-import-provisions-of-the-marine-mammal>.
- At this time, there is no action required. Co-management organizations and stakeholders will be provided updates on the status of our comparability finding applications as they become available.

### **Ghost Gear Fund**

- The Ghost Gear Fund is intended to support Canada's commitment to prevent and mitigate marine litter, and improve fisheries sustainability particularly with respect to Ghost Gear. The Government of Canada invested \$16.7 million from 2020-2022 and \$10 million for 2022/23.
- In 2022/23, two Arctic Region projects were successful in securing \$646,483 for ghost gear projects in Nunavut and the Northwest Territories. More information on Ghost Gear can be found on the DFO website at the following link: <https://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/fisheries-peches/management-gestion/ghostgear-equipementfantome/program-programme/index-eng.html>.

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