

SUBMISSION TO THE
NUNAVUT WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT BOARD
JUNE 2023

FOR

Information: X

Recommendation:

Decision:

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

Updates:

Marine Mammals:

1) Narwhal

- On December 1, 2022, the Qikiqtaaluk Wildlife Board, the Ikajutit Hunter and Trappers Association (HTA), the Mittimatalik HTA, the Nangmautaq HTA, and the Nattivak HTA initiated a judicial review of Fisheries and Oceans Canada's (DFO) application of 2021/22 narwhal season dates and allocations to the 2022/23 harvest year.
- While the judicial review proceedings are ongoing, the Nunavut Narwhal Working Group continues to work on its review and update of the *Integrated Fisheries Management Plan (IFMP) for Narwhal in the Nunavut Settlement Area*. A Narwhal Working Group meeting was held on March 15th and the next meeting is planned for May 4th pending availability of Working Group members.
- The 2022/23 narwhal harvest season ended on March 31, 2023. DFO has contacted all Hunters and Trappers Organizations/Associations (HTOs/HTAs) and Government of Nunavut (GN) Wildlife Office staff requesting that 2022/23 narwhal tags be returned to DFO. Carry-over allocations cannot be finalised until the harvest information from the previous season is returned and analysed by DFO.
- Narwhal tags and information packages for the 2023/24 harvest season are currently being prepared. DFO has recently requested decisions on community allocations from Regional Wildlife Organizations (RWOs) including carry-over numbers. Once the allocation decisions have been confirmed, the 2023/24 tags will be distributed to communities.
- Based on feedback from the Ikajutit, Mittimatalik, Nangmautaq, and Nattivak HTAs, the same season dates and allocations from 2022/23 have been applied to the 2023/24 narwhal harvest season for the communities of Arctic Bay, Pond Inlet, Clyde River, and Qikiqtarjuaq.

2) Walrus

- DFO's Minister accepted the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board (NWMB) decision to approve a total of 152 walrus sport hunts for 2023 (Coral Harbour 51, Arviat 4, Igloodik 12, Pond Inlet 6, and Sanirajak 79), subject to the conditions set out in the NWMB's decision letter.
- All walrus sport hunt outfitters have been notified of their successful applications, and DFO will continue to work with outfitters over the next several months to ensure all necessary documentation is received prior to issuing licences and sample kits.
- Following the NWMB's notification in January 2023 that they are discontinuing their interim walrus sport hunt policy, the Nunavut Walrus Working Group continues to collaborate on development of an updated process for the walrus sport hunt to ensure continued sustainable harvesting. The Walrus Working Group most recently met on April 25th to continue these discussions.

3) Beluga

- The Cumberland Sound Beluga Working Group (CSB-WG) continues to meet regularly throughout the year. The CSB-WG last met in Iqaluit in March 2023, and the next meeting is currently scheduled for June 28th in Pangnirtung.
- The genetic population structure of beluga whales in Cumberland Sound was assessed and reviewed at a Canadian Science Advisory Secretariat (CSAS) peer review process in October 2022 and [published online in December 2022](#).
- Collaborative research between DFO Science and the Pangnirtung HTA is ongoing and planning is underway for summer 2023 fieldwork.
- As was done in 2022, DFO Fisheries Management and Science will fund Cumberland Sound Beluga hunt monitoring and sample coordinators to assist the Pangnirtung HTA in monitoring the 2023 beluga hunt.

4) Bowhead

- DFO is aware of a few communities that are interested in hosting a bowhead hunt in 2023 and is awaiting formal advisory of host communities from all three RWOs. Once host communities have been selected, DFO will work with communities on receipt of required information and licence issuance.
- DFO Fisheries Management (FM) is finalizing marine mammal work plans for the coming year, and a request has been submitted to resume bowhead co-management planning. If approved, FM staff in Winnipeg will contact Bowhead Working Group members about suitable meeting dates in 2023 to advance development of a draft IFMP for decision by the NWMB and the Nunavik Marine Region Wildlife Board.

5) Harvest Reporting

- Staff from the Iqaluit DFO office recently contacted all HTOs/HTAs and GN Wildlife Office staff requesting final 2022/23 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 carcass 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

- The Kitikmeot Arctic char workshop planned by DFO for January 2023 was postponed and is now being planned for January 2024. The goal of the workshop is to discuss regional fishery priorities/concerns and research interests with Kitikmeot HTOs and co-management organizations.
- DFO hosted a Kivalliq Arctic char workshop in March 2023 in Rankin Inlet with attendees from Kivalliq HTOs, the GN, the Kivalliq Wildlife Board, and others. Updates included past community sampling programs, discussion of research and fishery priorities, and identification of management concerns for each community in the region. A meeting summary will be developed and distributed to meeting attendees and co-management partners in the near future.
- The Cambridge Bay Arctic Char IFMP Working Group is planning to meet in May 2023 for its annual IFMP review, the 2022 post-season fishing meeting, and the 2023 pre-season fishing meeting.
- DFO is in the process of consolidating and finalizing 2022/23 harvest information for Arctic char fisheries across Nunavut in collaboration with fishers, fish plants, and country food stores.

Greenland Halibut (Turbot):

- The 2023 Cumberland Sound winter turbot fishery opened on January 30th, following a pre-season public meeting in Pangnirtung.
- DFO received requests from Baffin Fisheries Coalition (BFC) and the Pangnirtung Fisheries Ltd/Cumberland Sound Fisheries Ltd (PFL/CSFL) partnership with support from the Pangnirtung HTA to carry over unused 2022 turbot quota into 2023. NWMB staff confirmed support of a carry-forward consistent with the *Quota Carry-Forward Guidelines for Atlantic Canada*. On

March 23rd, DFO notified the Pangnirtung HTA and PFL/CSFL of the approval to carry forward 75 t. The total amount of turbot that can be harvested in the CSTMA in 2023 is thus 575 t.

- The 2023 Cumberland Sound winter turbot fishery closed on April 10th. More than 85 fishers signed up under the HTA's licence to participate in the fishery and landed 550 t of turbot (round weight). This leaves 25 t available for harvesting in the summer of 2023.

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

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