

July 4<sup>th</sup>, 2012

**Peter Kusugak**

A/Chairperson of the  
Nunavut Wildlife Management Board  
Inuksugait Complex, P.O. Box 1379  
Iqaluit, NU, X0A 0H0



**RE: Nunavik Marine Region Wildlife Board submission to the public hearing of the NWMB concerning a proposed “Integrated Fisheries Management Plan for Narwhal in the Nunavut Settlement Area”, including the establishment of total allowable harvests, basic needs levels and non-quota limitations.**

Mr. Kusugak,

The Nunavik Marine Region Wildlife Board (NMRWB) appreciates this opportunity to share its views on the proposed Integrated Fisheries Management Plan, and on the establishment of total allowable harvests and non-quota limitations for narwhal in the Nunavut Settlement Area.

Please confirm reception of this document and of its inclusion within the NWMB’s public hearing registry. The information and positions detailed within this submission may be explained in further detail by the NMRWB’s participant to the public hearing you have scheduled on July 24-26, 2012. Clarification needed in advance of the hearings can be obtained by contacting NMRWB personnel at the coordinates below:

Nunavik Marine Region Wildlife Board  
P.O. Box 433, Inukjuak, QC, J0M 1M0  
Phone: (819) 254-8667 | Fax: (819) 254-8816  
Email: apadlayat@nmrwb.ca or moconnor@nmrwb.ca

On behalf of the NMRWB, I thank the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board in advance for giving full consideration to the information presented herein when reaching a decision on this matter.

Sincerely,

**Johnny Oovaut**

Chairman, Nunavik Marine Region Wildlife Board

...2/

## **The Nunavik Marine Region Wildlife Board's Role in the Management of Narwhal**

Under Article 5 of the Nunavik Inuit Land Claims Agreement (NILCA), the NMRWB is the main instrument of wildlife management for the Nunavik Marine Region. Its mandate is in fact quite similar to that of the NWMB under the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement, albeit restricted to the offshore area adjacent to northern Quebec (see description of Nunavik Marine Region in Article 3 of the NILCA). Decisions of the NMRWB must be based on the best available Science and *Inuit Qaujimaqatuqangit*; they must also recognize the harvesting rights and needs of Nunavik Inuit, while ensuring that harvests are sustainable.

The establishment of levels of Total Allowable Take (similar to Total Allowable Harvest in the NLCA), Basic Needs Levels and non-quota limitations for narwhal harvesting by Nunavik Inuit, in the NMR, are all responsibilities of the Nunavik Marine Region Wildlife Board (NILCA S.5.2.3). Of course, such NMRWB decisions to regulate narwhal harvesting would be subject to approval by the Minister responsible for fish and marine mammals (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans), in accordance with NILCA S.5.5.6.

## **Current Narwhal Harvesting Regulations in the Nunavik Marine Region**

As in the Nunavut Settlement Area, narwhal harvesting in the NMR is subject to the Marine Mammal Regulations of Canada's Fisheries Act. Under the said regulations, a license is required to hunt narwhal (S. 6(2)(b)) and must be affixed to the animal or its tusk as soon as it is killed (S. 24(a)). Additionally, the NILCA states that Nunavik Inuit may be required to obtain a license from the responsible management agency for the harvest of those species of cetaceans not regularly harvested in the 12 months preceding October 25, 2002 (NILCA S.5.3.19); narwhal are among these species. Currently, no narwhal tags are allocated to hunters in Nunavik, despite the presence of Narwhal in the NMR and the interest by Nunavimmiut to harvest them.

## **Request to Establish Total Allowable Take in the Nunavik Marine Region**

The NMRWB has received formal requests from the Regional Nunavimmi Umajulirijit Katujiqatigininga (RNUK) to establish a total allowable take for narwhal in the Nunavik Marine Region on two occasions. For clarification, the RNUK is Nunavik's equivalent under the NILCA agreement of Nunavut's Regional Wildlife Organizations.

Having been informed that the RNUK would present its first formal request to harvest narwhal during the NMRWB's 8<sup>th</sup> Regular Meeting (March 2011), the Board sent a letter (dated January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2011) to the Makivik Corp. and Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. (NTI) encouraging them to strike a sharing arrangement on behalf of Nunavik and Nunavut Inuit, respectively. The letter indicated

...3/

that the NMRWB intended to make a recommendation to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans regarding the harvest of narwhal by Nunavik Inuit.

During the said Board meeting, the NMRWB heard a presentation from DFO about their latest assessment of the Northern Hudson Bay stock. We were informed that the current allocations in Nunavut in fact surpassed DFO's recommended Total Allowable Landed Catch for this population. In addition, the Board was informed that Makivik and NTI had not yet reached a sharing arrangement for this species. In consideration of these facts, the NMRWB decided to postpone its decision to allow these two organizations to resume discussing a sharing arrangement and that such an agreement be presented to the NMRWB as soon as possible thereafter. Makivik and NTI were informed of this decision in a letter dated March 18<sup>th</sup>, 2011.

The most recent request was presented to the NMRWB on June 20<sup>th</sup>, 2012 during Regular Board Meeting 13. In the request, the RNUK asked that Nunavik Inuit be allowed to land a total of 20 narwhal per year in the Nunavik Marine Region. Considering this request and given DFO's revised stock assessment for Northern Hudson Bay narwhal, the NMRWB has reaffirmed its intent to establish a Total Allowable Take for narwhal in the Nunavik Marine Region; the process and timeline for doing so has yet to be confirmed.

### **Implications of the Shared Management of Northern Hudson Bay Narwhal**

Under the Nunavik Inuit Land Claims Agreement (S.5.5.4.1) the NMRWB must take account of harvesting activities that occur outside the Nunavik Marine Region when making decisions relative to TAT or non-quota limitations, among others, for species that cross jurisdictional boundaries. As stated previously, the NMRWB refrained from proposing the establishment of a TAT in the Nunavik Marine Region in March 2011 because doing so would have resulted in either an unsustainable harvest or a reduction of Nunavut's quota (based on the best available information presented to the NMRWB at that time).

Similarly, the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board must give consideration to harvesting activities outside the NSA for species that cross jurisdictional boundaries (NLCA S.5.3.4). Although Nunavik Inuit currently do not harvest narwhal, hunters have clearly indicated to the NMRWB that this is purely a result of the licensing requirements under the Marine Mammal Regulations, as opportunities to hunt have been frequent in past years. Furthermore, it is the NMRWB's opinion that the NWMB must also consider our Board's intent to establish a TAT. Because the NMRWB has not yet heard from all parties involved in its decision, it is impossible to provide an indication of the level of TAT that may be established in the NMR at this time. However, in rendering a Total Allowable Harvest decision, the NWMB must presume that a number of narwhal will be harvested in the Nunavik Marine Area, perhaps as soon as 2013.

...4/

### **Concluding Remarks**

The revised stock assessment produced by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans is a valuable example of how *Inuit Qaujimaqatuqangit* and Science can be combined to produce useful information. The survey results show a population that is much healthier than previously believed a population that is potentially capable of sustaining more harvesting than currently occurs. While a significant portion of this increase is expected to be allocated within the Nunavut Settlement Area, the NWMB, in recommending levels of Total Allowable Harvest for narwhal, must consider that the Nunavik Marine Region Wildlife Board will establish a Total Allowable Take for narwhal in the Nunavik Marine Region.