

**SUBMISSION TO THE
NUNAVUT WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT BOARD (NWMB)**

Regular Meeting No. RM 002- 2018

FOR

Information:

Decision:

Issue: ***Revision of Harvesting Credits based on an Increased TAH for Baffin Bay Polar Bears***

Background:

In March 2018, the NWMB approved Nunavut's Department of Environment (DoE) request to increase the Total Allowable Harvest (TAH) for Baffin Bay polar bears to 80 per year. The Qikiqtaaluk Wildlife Board (QWB) and the Hunters and Trappers Organizations (HTOs) of Qikiqtarjuaq, Clyde River and Pond Inlet generally supported this request; however, the QWB questions the effective date of this increased TAH because it affects recalculation of harvest credits for the affected harvesters and their communities.

To the best of our knowledge, the calculation of accumulated harvest credits to be carried-forward from July 2018 was announced by DoE only during consultations in Qikiqtarjuaq in February 2018. Available records do not indicate that this issue was announced in Pond Inlet and Clyde River. DoE told the Qikiqtarjuaq HTO that they intended to reset Baffin Bay polar bear harvest credits to zero (0) in July 2018.

According to DoE staff, the provision in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for resetting harvest credits to zero (0) with a new TAH is based on the assumption that any bears that were not harvested in the past would have contributed to any increase in new population and TAH estimates.

The QWB understands this; however, there are usually several years of delays between when new data are collected, when scientists finally analyse the data, when the Crown eventually releases results and consults communities and RWOs, and when NWMB and Ministerial decisions are finalized. Therefore, when a new TAH is established, the QWB recommends that the date for resetting past harvest credits, and recalculating of new credits should be based on the year in which new population data was collected, not years later when the TAH is eventually changed. The collected survey data would not account for unharvested bears during the intervening years.

The Baffin Bay polar bear population was last surveyed during 2011-13. The recent Baffin Bay harvest risk model was developed using population and harvest data up to 2013 (Regehr et al. 2017). The Scientific Committee for the Greenland-Nunavut Joint Polar Bear Commission found that the harvest model generally agreed with the population estimates derived from the 2011-13 survey data.

From that starting point during 2011-13, the model was then used to assess various population-environmental-harvest scenarios into the future. The harvest-risk option selected by the Joint Commission was a 15-year scenario having an annual harvest of 160 Baffin Bay bears at a 1:1 male : female ratio to be shared equally by Nunavut and Greenland (i.e., 80 bears for Nunavut).

Under section 5.3.3 of the Nunavut Agreement (NA), Inuit harvesting may be restricted or limited by the NWMB or a Minister to effect a valid conservation purpose. The analysis showing

that a higher harvest has been sustainable since 2013 indicates that contrary to NA section 5.3.3, Inuit harvesting of Baffin Bay polar bears has been unduly restricted for several years.

In 2017, the Government of Canada recognized this fact, and consequently removed the negative Non-Detrimental Finding for Baffin Bay polar bears retroactive to 2013.

The NWMB should similarly recognize the sustainability of the higher TAH by making the TAH of 80 Baffin Bay polar bears at a harvest ratio of 1 male to 1 female retroactive to 2013 for the purpose of recalculating harvest credits to become effective forward July 2018 going forward.

Consultation:

Directors and staff of the HTOs and the QWB attended a meeting of the Greenland-Nunavut Joint Polar Bear Commission in October 2017, and community consultations with DoE in February 2018. The HTOs did not state agreement with resetting harvest credits to zero (0) in July 2018. Staff of NTI also attended these meetings and have been consulted by QWB in this specific matter.

Staff of the QWB have had email communications with DoE staff on the issue of carry-forward of harvest credits for the new Baffin Bay polar bear population. QWB staff also consulted with Dr. E.V. Regehr to ensure that we understood the starting year for the harvest assessment model.

Recommendation:

1. The NWMB should make the new TAH of 80 Baffin Bay polar bears (at 1 male : 1 female) retroactively effective to 2013.
2. As per the MOU, harvest credits for Baffin Bay polar bears should then be reset to zero (0) for 2013-14, and subsequent harvest credits should be recalculated based on the revised retroactive TAH and the actual harvest since 2013. An example of these recalculations is provided in the table in the Appendix and in the attached xlsx file. These calculations can be reviewed by DoE, and the QWB is willing to collaborate with DoE to finalize them.
3. After consulting with DoE, the QWB will work with the three HTOs and develop an plan for the gradual use of accumulated negative and positive harvest credits over some years. We believe that the RWO and HTOs can deal with this question under the current MOU.

Reference:

Regehr, E.V., S. Atkinson, E.W. Born, K.L. Laidre, N.J. Lunn, and Ø. Wiig. 2017. Harvest Assessment for the Baffin Bay and Kane Basin Polar Bear Subpopulations: Final Report to the Canada-Greenland Joint Commission on Polar Bear, 31 July 2017: iii + 107 pp

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Recalculated Baffin Bay Polar Bear Harvest Credits based on a Revised TAH retroactive to 2013-14

Year	Revised Retroactive TAH (effective 2013-14)	Revised TAH Allocations								Actual Harvest							
		Pond Inlet		Clyde River		Qikiqtarjuaq		Baffin Bay Shared		Pond Inlet		Clyde River		Qikiqtarjuaq		Baffin Bay Shared	
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
2012-13	65	14	8	14	8	14	7	0	0	15	11	17	18	7	6	0	0
2013-14	80	11	11	11	11	11	11	7	7	15	6	14	10	17	5	0	0
2014-15	80	11	11	11	11	11	11	7	7	15	6	17	5	9	11	0	0
2015-16	80	11	11	11	11	11	11	7	7	12	8	19	6	11	7	0	0
2016-17	80	11	11	11	11	11	11	7	7	15	6	20	11	9	3	0	0
2017-18	80	11	11	11	11	11	11	7	7							0	0
2018-19	80	11	11	11	11	11	11	7	7							0	0

Year	Revised Annual Credits to Be Carried Forward								Revised Accumulated Credits As Applied in Each Year								Total Revised Accumulated Credits		
	Pond Inlet		Clyde River		Qikiqtarjuaq		Baffin Bay Shared		Pond Inlet		Clyde River		Qikiqtarjuaq		Baffin Bay Shared		Male	Female	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
2012-13	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2013-14	-4	5	-3	1	-6	6	7	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2014-15	-4	5	-6	6	2	0	7	7	-4	5	-3	1	-6	6	7	7	-6	19	
2015-16	-1	3	-8	5	0	4	7	7	-8	10	-9	7	-4	6	14	14	-13	56	
2016-17	-4	5	-9	0	2	8	7	7	-9	13	-17	12	-4	10	21	21	-16	93	
2017-18									-13	18	-26	12	-2	18	28	28	-22	132	
2018-19																			

- Note1: The previous TAH was 65 at about 2 males : 1 female, which is shown for 2012-13. The TAH was allocated 22 to Pond Inlet, 22 to Clyde River and 21 to Qikitarjuaq. To apply the retroactive TAH to 2013, harvest credits were reset to 0 for 2012-13 and applied in 2013-14.
- Note 2: The retroactive TAH should be 80 at 1 male : 1 female, and first applied in 2013-14. In the recalculation , the revised TAH was allocated 22 to each of the 3 communities, and the remaining 14 were allocated in a Shared Baffin Bay group because they were not allocated to an individual community.
- Note 3: The actual reported harvest for each year and community was used to recalculate the credit earned in each licence year, and then applied and accumulated in the next year.