

SUBMISSION TO THE
NUNAVUT WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT BOARD
September 2020

FOR

Information: X

Decision:

Issue: Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada – Operational Updates

Updates:

Staffing:

- Larry Dow retired from Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) in early May, and will be temporarily back-filled by Kevin Bill.
- Jeremiah Young has accepted a new position with the Science division of DFO. Future inquiries regarding fisheries management should be directed to Anika Bychok.

Marine Mammals:

1) Narwhal:

- DFO is in the process of coordinating with Hunters and Trappers Organizations/Associations (HTOs/HTAs) for the 2019/20 narwhal tag returns and summarizing the harvest statistics. This includes calculating the amount of carry-over tags available.
- The 2020/21 narwhal harvest season has commenced and all four communities with seasonal tags have started their summer seasons. DFO has requested decisions on the community allocations from the Regional Wildlife Organizations including the carry-over numbers. Narwhal tags and information packages for the 2020/21 harvest season have been sent to most communities. Once the final allocation decision has been confirmed, the remaining 2020/21 tags will be distributed to communities.
- The Baffin Island narwhal survey proposed to take place in summer 2020 was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This survey would have focused on obtaining an abundance estimate for the East Baffin Island, Eclipse Sound, and Admiralty Inlet narwhal stocks. It is currently unclear when it will next be possible to conduct a survey of these management units.

2) Walrus:

- In July 2020, the Minister of DFO approved an additional two walrus sport hunts for 2020, in addition to the 76 that were approved in February (Coral Harbour 32, Hall Beach 15, Igloolik

25, Pond Inlet 4, plus 2 for Arviat).

- Walrus sport hunt outfitters have been notified of their 2020 sport hunt allocation approvals. Some outfitters have informed DFO that they will not be conducting sport hunts this summer due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- DFO will continue to follow-up with outfitters on any booked hunts for 2020 and will distribute sport hunt packages as needed, which include the hunt report form, sampling kit, and licences. DFO will not require COVID-19 safety plans before issuing these sport hunt licences, but will advise outfitters to follow the advice/requirements of Nunavut's Chief Public Health Officer.
- Community-based catch monitoring programs for walrus are ongoing in the communities of Sanirajak and Coral Harbour, with the hiring of local Community Coordinators underway.

3) Cumberland Sound Beluga:

- The Cumberland Sound Beluga Working Group was supposed to meet in May 2020 but due to COVID-19 this meeting was cancelled. The Working Group will continue to collaborate via email and hopes to hold virtual meetings through Zoom before 2021.
- The Cumberland Sound beluga population has a quota of 41 belugas per year that can be harvested by Inuit of Pangnirtung. DFO was notified on July 7th by the Pangnirtung HTA that the quota was fully harvested for 2020.

4) Bowhead

- DFO issued Marine Mammal Fishing Licenses to Coral Harbour on July 10th and Sanirajak on July 24th, for the 2020 bowhead harvest. These communities have also been contacted to coordinate sample collection from harvested whales. Qikiqtarjuaq had received approval for a hunt but has since decided not to host, citing COVID-19 concerns.
- If supported by co-management partners and Working Group members, virtual methods may be used to provide community engagement on the development of the bowhead Integrated Fisheries Management Plan (IFMP). At this time, in-person meetings are not possible due to travel restrictions in Nunavut that are in place until August 2020.

Arctic Char:

1) Reported Harvest

- For the 2019-20 Arctic char fishery, a total of 23,673 kg was reported harvested to DFO.

2) Pangnirtung Fisheries

- DFO was notified by the Pangnirtung HTA that the Cumberland Sound Arctic char summer fishery would open on August 3rd. Licences and fisher schedules were issued and sent to Pangnirtung in advance of the opening date.
- 3) Exploratory Fisheries
- The Exploratory Fisheries in both Qikiqtarjuaq and Pond Inlet have completed the mandatory five-year data collection protocol. The biological samples and catch-per-unit-effort data from these fisheries will soon be sent to Winnipeg for analysis.
 - Other Exploratory Fisheries are ongoing out of Iqaluit and Gjoa Haven.

Greenland Halibut (Turbot):

1) Cumberland Sound Turbot Management Area (CSTMA)

- A Canadian Science Advisory Secretariat (CSAS) regional peer review meeting was held in November 2019. While the Science Advisory Report is not yet finalized, the stock appears healthy. An increase in Total Allowable Harvest (TAH) was not advised during the CSAS meeting because the full quota of 500 t has only been harvested twice in the history of this fishery (2018 and 2020) and therefore the sustainability of this TAH has not yet been established. Once finalized, the CSAS report will be publically available.
- The 2020 turbot fishery in Cumberland Sound opened in January. The entire 500 t TAH was harvested by the end of April (504.63 t resulting in an overrun) during the on-ice fishery. On June 17th 2020, DFO received confirmation from the Pangnirtung HTA that they supported a carry forward of unharvested 2019 turbot in the CSTMA. Following the *Quota Carry-Forward Guidelines for Atlantic Canada* and reconciling for the 4.63 t overharvest in 2020, the carry-forward available for harvest became 70.37 t. DFO approved the carry-forward via letter to the Pangnirtung HTA on July 7th.

Prepared by: Iqaluit Office – Fisheries and Oceans Canada

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