

SUBMISSION TO THE
NUNAVUT WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT BOARD
May 2022

FOR

Information: X

Decision:

Issue: Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) Update – Marine conservation initiatives

Background

DFO Marine Planning and Conservation Program (formerly the Oceans Program) focuses on implementation of responsibilities within the *Oceans Act*, using integrated oceans management and marine conservation tools. DFO - Arctic Region, is working with Inuit partners on a number of marine conservation initiatives within and adjacent to Nunavut. These activities include advancement of marine protection measures in Tuvaijuittuq and around Southampton Island and management of existing marine refuges. At the request of the Qikiqtani Inuit Association (QIA) and the community of Sanikiluaq, DFO has also become involved in multi-party discussions on advancing consideration of protection measures in Qikiqtait.

DFO is also advancing marine environmental quality guidelines in support of sustainable development and integrated management, and supporting implementation of recommendations from the Pikialasorsuaq Commission within Sarvariuq in partnership with the QIA.

Current Status

Southampton Island Area of Interest

- DFO and Kivalliq Inuit Association (KIA) have partnered to advance the Southampton Island Area of Interest for potential designation as a new Marine Protected Area. The Southampton Island Area of Interest encompasses the nearshore waters around Southampton Island and Chesterfield Inlet in the Kivalliq Region of Nunavut. The final boundary of a potential future Marine Protected Area will be based on assessments and consultation.
- The Southampton Island Area of Interest Co-Development Committee (CDC) has representation from Aiviit and Aqigiq Hunters and Trappers Organizations, Inniurviit Co-Management Committee, Government of Nunavut, KIA, and DFO. The CDC met most recently via teleconference in September 2021, to discuss progress on the Marine Protected Area process. A series of additional CDC meetings is being planned for May and June 2022.
- An Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit workshop was held in February 2020 in Rankin Inlet, with five participants from Chesterfield Inlet, eight from Coral Harbour, and one each from KIA and Government of Nunavut. An Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit Workshop Report was

produced. The draft IQ Workshop Report will be reviewed with residents of Chesterfield Inlet and Coral Harbour before being finalized.

- DFO Canadian Science Advisory Secretariat (CSAS) meetings were held in December 2018 in Winnipeg and virtually in August 2020 to develop a Biophysical and Ecological Overview of the Southampton Island Area of Interest. Meeting documents are publicly available on the CSAS website.
- Along with the Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit report and Science documents noted, additional assessments are being conducted: ecological risk assessment, , socio-economic overview, and petroleum potential report. The risk assessment of current and potential future activities will inform the regulatory intent (i.e., proposed management measures). Draft conservation objectives for the area are currently being developed and will be discussed at upcoming CDC meetings.
- DFO will continue engaging with partners and stakeholders throughout the Marine Protected Area establishment process.

Tuvaijuittuq Marine Protected Area

- Since the establishment of Tuvaijuittuq Marine Protected Area by Ministerial Order in August 2019, an assessment to determine the feasibility and desirability of long-term protection in the area has been underway in partnership with Parks Canada, Qikiqtani Inuit Association and Government of Nunavut. In February 2020, a working group was established with members from all parties to implement an agreed-upon work plan. Tuvaijuittuq Working Group advancement of this work is ongoing, with some delays due to COVID 19.
- Face-to-face community consultations in Arctic Bay, Clyde River, Grise Fiord, Pond Inlet and Resolute Bay were planned for fall 2020, and again in 2021, but have been postponed. The Working Group is currently developing ideas for an alternative consultation process and materials for circulation in the new fiscal year. Additional consultations are expected later in the feasibility assessment process to provide communities and stakeholders with opportunities to comment on preliminary results.
- Upon completion of the feasibility assessment and associated consultation processes, a report with recommendations will be submitted the Parties (DFO, PCA, QIA, GN) for review and decision by the Tuvaijuittuq Steering Committee.

Eastern Arctic Marine Refuges

- With the support of co-management partners, fishing industry, and environmental organizations, three eastern Arctic Marine Refuges, fisheries closures under the Fisheries Act were implemented in 2017 also contributing 1.17% to marine conservation.
- These refuges were established to support the conservation of sensitive benthic areas, as well as significant areas of coral and sponge biodiversity.
- DFO monitors compliance with these fishery closures by conducting at-sea patrols and aerial surveillance as well as using vessel monitoring systems.
- Work is currently underway to begin the development of monitoring and long-term management plans with the Marine conservation working group as well as DFO sectors in Arctic and Newfoundland-Labrador region (for Hatton Basin Conservation Area).

- Research projects such as electronic tagging and monitoring of Greenland Halibut, Greenland Shark and skates as well as fisheries surveys continue in and around these Marine Refuges.
- DFO was thrilled to be a partner in the public outreach project 'Guardians of Tariuq' which highlights the eastern Arctic Marine Refuges.

Sarvarjuaq (Pikialasorsuaq) and Qikiqtait

- Pikialasorsuaq means “*Great upwelling*” and is the Kalaallisut (West Greenlandic) name for the North Water Polynya, an important area for many species of marine mammals, birds and fishes. In Canada, it has been named Sarvarjuaq, the “big, open water” in Inuktitut. It has cultural significance and is an important travel route for Canadian and Greenlandic Inuit. These are internationally shared waters by Canada, Greenland and the Kingdom of Denmark.
- Previously, the Inuit Circumpolar Council established the Pikialasorsuaq Commission, which recommended protection of the North Water Polynya, as did the Inuit-Crown Partnership Committee through a joint leaders statement.
- DFO has been working with QIA to advance protection of the Canadian portion of this region, Sarvarjuaq, in alignment with QIA’s shared Prospectus for Inuit Stewardship and Blue Economy.
- Additional discussions are ongoing and relate to:
 - How best to provide capacity and support to Canadian Inuit partners and communities;
 - How to collect and incorporate Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit throughout the process;
 - How to effectively communicate Canadian Inuit interests at international discussions with Greenland and Denmark.
- QIA and the community of Sanikiluaq have also shared their interest in marine conservation around Qikiqtait (Belcher Islands) with federal protection measures.
- In August 2021 a funding agreement was signed with QIA that will invest \$3.45 million over two years to support launching and development of the Nautiqsuqtiit Program in the community of Sanikiluaq. The program will provide employment and support Inuit-led research and monitoring to ensure Inuit knowledge informs marine management in Qikiqtait. The Nautiqsuqtiit program was piloted in 2018 and also operates in Arctic Bay, Clyde River, Grise Fiord, Pond Inlet, and Resolute Bay.
- DFO is leading a whole-of-government negotiation of an Inuit Impact and Benefit Agreement (IIBA) with QIA to support Inuit-led marine conservation and management opportunities in the Sarvarjuaq and Qikiqtait areas of Nunavut.
- Formal IIBA negotiations have been underway since December 2021.
- DFO is also working with the GN to explore its involvement in potential protection measures for Qikiqtait and Sarvarjuaq.

Marine Environmental Quality

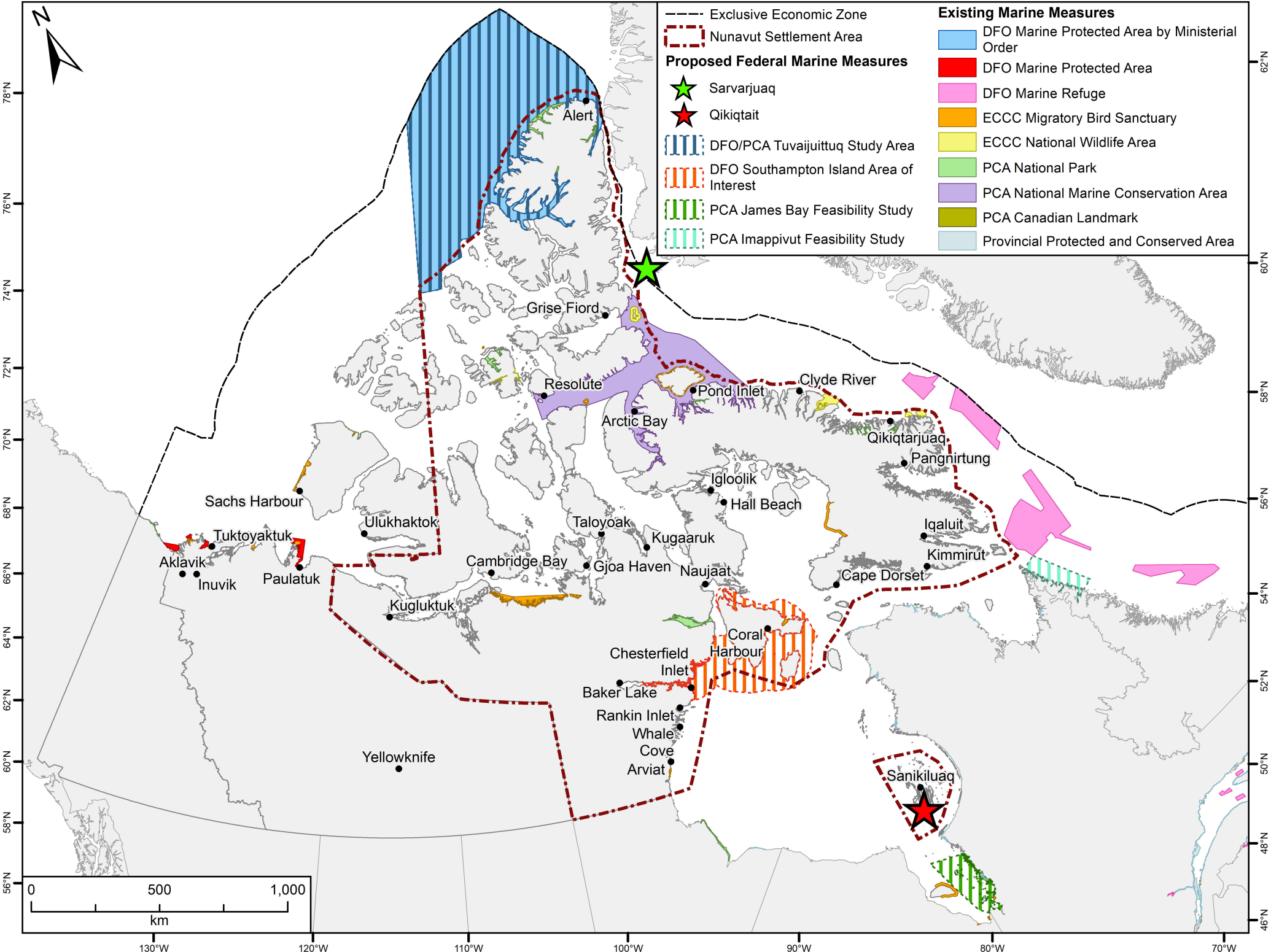
- Recent Oceans Protection Plan (OPP) investments are supporting Marine Environmental Quality (MEQ) programs under the *Oceans Act*. A commitment under

OPP is to focus on mitigating the risk of human caused stressors on the marine environment, including impacts of underwater noise from ships.

- In collaboration with partners, the national MEQ program is working towards developing integrated and evidenced-based tools and strategies to better manage and maintain healthy and sustainable marine, coastal and estuarine ecosystems.
- Nationally, working on development of an Ocean Noise Strategy to coordinate federal efforts in understanding and managing human-induced underwater noise. A discussion document was developed in collaboration with other federal departments and agencies to outline a framework for the strategy and act as the primary mechanism to receive initial feedback from partners, stakeholders, and the Canadian public. A presentation was delivered to the Nunavut Marine Conservation Targets Steering Committee on December 2, 2020.
- Within Nunavut, DFO is working with partners to establish underwater noise baseline data within Frobisher Bay, Arctic Bay, and James Bay.
- Developing an Arctic Pile Driving Protocol for Reducing Risks Caused by Underwater Noise. The draft is complete, it has been filed tested at the Iqaluit Deep Sea Port development site and has been submitted to DFO Science for review.

Prepared by: Arctic Region – Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Marine Planning and Conservation Program

Date: April 14, 2022



Existing and potential future Arctic protected and conserved areas. DFO = Fisheries and Oceans Canada; PCA = Parks Canada Agency; ECCC = Environment and Climate Change Canada