



**SUBMISSION TO THE**

**NUNAVUT WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT BOARD**

**FOR**

**Information:**

**Decision: X**

**Issue:** Qikiqtaaluk Wildlife Board and Pangnirtung Hunters and Trappers Association request to use 16 Davis Strait polar bear tags

**Background:**

- In February 2022, the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board (NWMB) and Government of Nunavut Minister of Environment (ENV) accepted the revised Nunavut polar bear harvest management document, the Harvest and Credit Calculation System (HACCS), and is an accompanying document to the Nunavut Polar Bear Co-Management Plan that was accepted in 2019.
- Section 5.7.2.1 of the HACCS states that credit requests greater than 25% of the subpopulations TAH in a given harvest year may pose a potential conservation concern and will automatically be sent to the NWMB for review.
- On December 16, 2022, the Qikiqtaaluk Wildlife Board (QWB) forwarded ENV their approval of Pangnirtung Hunters and Trappers Association's (PHTA) credit request to use 8 male and 8 female Davis Strait (DS) subpopulation polar bear credits during the 2022/2023 harvest season.
- On Wednesday January 25, 2023, ENV responded with a letter acknowledging this request and informing the QWB that 16 credits is above 25% of the TAH for DS. The current TAH for DS is 61; the 25% threshold is 15.25.
- In this letter, ENV reminded the QWB that credit requests over the 25% threshold would require NWMB approval, as per the HACCS. ENV informed QWB and PHTA that ENV will immediately release 15 tags in accordance with the 25% request threshold. ENV enquired what ratio of tags PHTA would like (i.e., 7 males and 8 females or 8 males and 7 females).
- ENV also indicated they would submit the decision for the extra 1 tag for NWMB approval.

- As per Section 5.7.2.1 of the HACCS regarding the automatic review for credits above the 25% threshold, we are forwarding this request to NWMB for their direction whether or not to release the one additional tag.

**Current Status:**

- Scientific data from the Davis Strait subpopulation indicate a slight decline in polar bear survival which is in line with the current management objective for a slight reduction, but overall, a stable population.
- Scientific data has not found evidence for a relationship between survival and any environmental variables (e.g. sea ice changes, climate changes, seal abundance).
- Per the GN's mandate to ensure stable wildlife populations for sustainable harvesting into future generations and role as polar bear co-management partner, ENV encourages principles of conservation be applied. In the case of the Davis Strait subpopulation, it is relatively stable and ENV does not believe releasing 1 additional credit would present a conservation concern.

**Recommendations:**

1. ENV recommends that the NWMB approves the request for 1 Davis Strait polar bear credit for use by the Pangnirtung Hunters and Trappers Association.