

# **Request for Nunavut Wildlife Management Board Approval of a Ministerial Order Marine Protected Area (MPA) in Qikiqtait**

## **Consultation and Engagement Summary**

### **Partnerships**

Since 2019, the Government of Canada and QIA have been working together to identify options for the conservation and protection of Qikiqtait and other sites within the Qikiqtani Region of Nunavut. In 2021 a Qikiqtait and Sarvarjuaq Working Group (the Working Group) was created to advance the conservation and protection of the proposed Qikiqtait and Sarvarjuaq MPAs. The Qikiqtait and Sarvarjuaq Working Group consist of members from the Qikiqtani Inuit Association (QIA), Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO), Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC), Transport Canada and the Government of Nunavut. The Working Group has supported the required processes to create the two potential Marine Protected Areas by Ministerial Order. The Working Group also provided awareness and shared information with the Inuit Impact and Benefit Agreement (IIBA) negotiation table as needed, with the objective to work in parallel. Only DFO, ECCC, QIA and the Government of Nunavut travelled to the communities as part of the consultations for Qikiqtait.

### **Community Consultations**

In 2019, the community-led Sanikiluaq Qikiqtait Steering Committee (SQSC), comprised of representation from the Sanikiluaq Hunters and Trappers (HTA), the Sanikiluaq Hamlet Council and the Arctic Eider Society, was formed to advance Inuit environmental stewardship in and around Sanikiluaq. There are 18 members in the SQSC and it includes the chair of the Sanikiluaq HTA, the Mayor of Sanikiluaq, and the Executive Director of the Arctic Eider Society. The SQSC is the primary point of contact in Sanikiluaq on conservation matters. The SQSC met with QIA to assert their position that conservation in Qikiqtait must remain a community-driven process while expressing their support for the Government of Canada's proposed approach to protecting the area. QIA supported the SQSC's vision, and worked with the community to secure funding via the Canada Nature Fund while IIBA negotiations were underway.

Virtual meetings between the SQSC, QIA and the Government of Canada (represented by DFO and ECCC) began in July 2020 to support resource inventory activities in Qikiqtait. In 2021 and 2022, the SQSC further advanced its community-driven efforts to implement their conservation programs, including a wide variety of sea ice, oceanographic and wildlife monitoring programs.

Representatives of the Qikiqtait and Sarvarjuaq Working Group with members from QIA, DFO, ECCC and the Government of Nunavut, conducted two rounds of consultations. The first round of consultations occurred in Sanikiluaq, Nunavut between November 7 - 8 2023. During the November 2023 consultations, surveys were handed out to Sanikiluarmit present at the consultations, with 27 respondents in total. The survey consisted of three questions regarding the objectives of the proposed Qikiqtait MPA by Ministerial Order. The second round of consultations took place from April 16 - 18 2024. During the April 2024 consultations, surveys were also handed out, with 16 respondents in total. The second survey consisted of 11 questions about local use of the Qikiqtait area. The purpose of the second survey was to document the current and ongoing local activities being undertaken within the proposed boundaries of the MPA. The survey questions from the two rounds of consultations and a summary of the responses are included in the What We Heard Report.

On November 7, 2023, the 18 members of the SQSC hosted the Working Group members in the Qikiqtait Centre board room and provided updates on community priorities and community-led initiatives. This information was complementary to the focused conversations around marine and terrestrial protection for Qikiqtait. On November 8, 2023, Working Group members again met with the SQSC to conduct a day-long meeting featuring presentations on the proposed MPA by Ministerial Order, Fisheries Management, Qikiqtait Terrestrial Protection and the Qikiqtani Regional Conservation Model.

Working Group members also met with the Sanikiluaq general public on November 8, 2023, in the multi-purpose hall of Sanikiluaq High School. The meeting featured a presentation on the proposed MPA by Ministerial Order with DFO under the *Oceans Act*. QIA's long-term protection vision for Qikiqtait and how this relates to the community's priorities was also discussed. Simultaneous interpretation was provided by the Chair of Sanikiluaq Hunters and Trappers Organization. A total of 96 adult community members were present for this meeting.

On April 16, 2024, the Working Group returned to Sanikiluaq in the Qikiqtait Centre to engage in the second round of consultations, with the first day involving presentations from DFO, ECCC and QIA updating community members on progress to date, sharing the proposed boundaries of the MPA, and distributing surveys to determine from community members what activities are taking place within the proposed MPA boundaries. On April 17, 2024, the Working Group reconvened in the Qikiqtait Centre during the morning to continue discussions and questions. On April 17, a public meeting was held in the multi-purpose hall of Sanikiluaq High School with simultaneous interpretation into Inuktitut. The meeting featured similar presentations to what was shared with the SQSC, the proposed MPA boundaries were shared with the public, and a question period occurred. A total of 54 adult community members were present. On April 18, 2024, a presentation from Fisheries Management occurred, and the topic of emerging fisheries was discussed in relation to the proposed MPA and Sanikiluaq's interests.

There was discussion by community members about the approach for protecting the marine environment, with some indicating their support for the proposed Marine Protected Area by Ministerial Order. Discussions centered around local infrastructure interests, concerns about the health of rivers that flow into Qikiqtait, the importance of emergency response and prioritizing working together with adjacent Nunavik and Cree community members. In general, there was a lot of support indicated for protecting Qikiqtait, and many requests for communities to be involved in the long-term management of the area. DFO informed community members that after the second round of consultations were complete, they would receive a report summarizing the feedback received during consultations as well as a request for a letter to formally support the establishment of Qikiqtait as a Marine Protected Area by Ministerial Order.

In September 2024 DFO distributed a "What We Heard Report" to the Sanikiluaq Hunters and Trappers, the Arctic Eider Society and the Sanikiluaq Hamlet in English and Sanikiluaq Inuktitut dialect. This report included meeting summaries for all meetings held in both rounds of consultations, feedback received from the community and responses to questions that came up during the meetings. The report also included results of the survey distribution and informed recipients that DFO would be seeking Support Letters as a next step in the process toward establishment.

In October 2024 DFO received letters in support of the proposed Ministerial Order MPA from the Sanikiluaq Hunters and Trappers, the Arctic Eider Society and the Sanikiluaq Hamlet. The Government of Nunavut has also provided a letter of support.

## **Other Stakeholders**

Stakeholders were identified with assistance from the Government of Nunavut and the Qikiqtani Inuit Association. The stakeholders engaged in this process included the following: Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, Nunavut Wildlife Management Board (NWMB), Nunavut Water Board, Qikiqtaaluk Wildlife Board, WWF-Canada, Oceans North, Ecology Action Centre, Arctic Eider Society, Canadian Wildlife Federation, Nunavut Fisheries Association, relevant stakeholders within the Eastern Arctic Groundfish Stakeholder Advisory Committee, Northern Shrimp Advisory Committee, Prairies and Northern Region-Canadian Marine Advisory Council, Nunavut Eastern Arctic Shipping Inc., Shipping Federation of Canada, Woodward Group of Companies, Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators, Northwest Territories and Nunavut Chamber of Mines, Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, Travel Nunavut, Keewaytinook Okimakanak, ArcticNet, Nunavut Research Institute, Amundsen Science, RV William Kennedy, Memorial University, Hudson Bay Consortium, Arctic Security Consultants, Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC), Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK), Mushkegowuk Council, Cree Nation Government, Grand Council of the Cree, Eeyou Marine Region Wildlife Board, Eeyou Marine Region Impact Review Board, Eeyou Marine Region Planning Commission, Makkivik Corporation, Kativik Regional Government, Regional Nunavimmi Uumajulirijiit Katutjiqatigiinninga, Nunavik Marine Region Wildlife Board, Nunavik Marine Region Impact Review Board, and Nunavik Marine Region Planning Commission.

DFO also engaged all implicated federal departments, including (but not limited to) ECCC, Transport Canada, Crown-Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, Parks Canada, Natural Resources Canada, Canadian Coast Guard, Global Affairs Canada, and Department of National Defense.

In July 2024, DFO distributed letters to the identified stakeholders. These letters were provided in English, French and Inuktitut. The first letter informed stakeholders that the Qikiqtani Inuit Association, the Government of Nunavut and the Government of Canada were assessing short-term protection measures for Qikiqtait. The letter also introduced Marine Protected Areas by Ministerial Order as the proposed protection tool and requested feedback and information about ongoing and anticipated activities in the area. In October 2024, a second letter was distributed to stakeholders. The second letter outlined the proposed regulations for Qikiqtait and provided a list of the classes of ongoing activities documented. In the second letter, stakeholders were invited to provide comments and feedback on the proposed regulations. No feedback or comments on the proposed regulations were received.

In addition to the distribution of two stakeholder letters, DFO consulted with stakeholders further at their request. At the request of the Government of Nunavut, Fisheries and Oceans Canada sought information from Kuhkenah (KNET), a company interested in surveying areas within the proposed Qikiqtait boundaries toward the possibility of laying fiber optic cable. KNET informed Fisheries and Oceans Canada that at present, their plans did not include Sanikiluaq in the fiber optic connectivity. After discussions with Fisheries and Oceans Canada, KNET advised that their planned activities would not fall within the proposed Qikiqtait boundaries.

Makkivik's Department of Environment, Wildlife and Research reached out to Fisheries and Oceans Canada requesting additional information about the proposed Qikiqtait MPA. In September 2024 Fisheries and Oceans Canada conducted a presentation including information about the plans for Qikiqtait to become a Marine Protected Area by Ministerial Order. In addition, Fisheries and Oceans Canada provided more detailed information about a Ministerial Order MPA as well as what activities will be allowed if Qikiqtait becomes an MPA. There was no follow-up information requested.

DFO provided an update to the NWMB at its October 31, 2024, quarterly meeting to notify that a submission and presentation would be made for their approval in February 2025.

DFO submitted a proposal to the Nunavut Planning Commission (NPC) for conformity determination on November 6, 2024, on November 13 NPC accepted the proposal for review. On November 15, 2024, NPC referred the proposal to the Nunavut Impact Review Board (NIRB) for further screening and public comment period.

DFO presented to the Qikiqtaaluk Wildlife Board (QWB) on the proposal on November 27, 2024, providing information on the community support letters received and notifying the Board that DFO would be seeking their endorsement. DFO will continue to engage the QWB on this site.

DFO sent notifications to partners, community HTAs and hamlet councils, as well as stakeholders in advance of pre-publication of the proposed new regulation in Canada Gazette, Part I. This 30-day public comment period will open during December and close mid-January.