

SUBMISSION TO THE
NUNAVUT WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT BOARD
SEPTEMBER 2025

FOR**Information: X****Recommendation:****Decision:**

Issue: Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) – Fisheries Management (FM) Operational Updates

Marine Mammals:**1. Narwhal**

- The total reported landings for narwhal management units in the 2024/25 harvest season were: Jones Sound 45, Smith Sound 0, Northern Hudson Bay 130, Somerset Island 81, East Baffin Island 148, Admiralty Inlet 195, and Eclipse Sound 123.
- A Canadian Science Advisory Secretariat (CSAS) peer-review meeting is anticipated for 2025 to update abundance estimates and sustainable harvest level advice for Baffin Bay narwhal stocks. The Nunavut Narwhal Working Group continues its collaborative review and update of the *Integrated Fisheries Management Plan (IFMP) for Narwhal in the Nunavut Settlement Area*. The most recent Narwhal Working Group meeting was held in late March 2025. DFO appreciates the ongoing participation of Nunavut Wildlife Management Board (NWMB) staff at these Working Group meetings.

2. Walrus

- The total reported subsistence landings for walrus within the Nunavut Settlement Area for the 2024/25 season is 3.
- The total reported landings of walrus by sport hunters in 2024/25 was 30.
- Following the updated licensing process, 107 walrus sport hunts were approved for 2025-26 (Arviat 4, Coral Harbour 65, Igloodik 18, Iqaluit 3, and Sanirajak 17).
- A CSAS peer-review meeting to update abundance estimates for high Arctic Atlantic walrus stocks occurred on January 28-29, 2025. The CSAS recommendations and conclusions will be available once the translations are complete.

3. Beluga

- The Cumberland Sound Beluga (CSB) Working Group continues to meet and work towards sustainable management of beluga by reviewing historical material, identifying current knowledge gaps, and through the application of the best available *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* (IQ) and scientific knowledge.

- The most recent CSB Working Group meeting was held virtually on June 19, 2025. The next CSB Working Group meeting will be held in Pangnirtung, NU and will be followed by a community meeting. The date for these meetings has not been determined. DFO acknowledges the ongoing participation of the NWMB at the CSB Working Group and community meetings.
- DFO looks forward to continued collaboration with co-management partners to ensure the sustainable management of the Cumberland Sound Beluga population by working towards developing an IFMP.
- The CSB Working Group requested that additional beluga hunt monitors be hired for 2025 to support the Pangnirtung HTO in monitoring the large hunt area and ensuring the quota is followed. With support from DFO staff, the Pangnirtung HTO applied for funding for increased monitoring through the [DFO Indigenous Fishery Monitoring Fund](#). The Pangnirtung HTO received this funding and was able to hire three CSB hunt monitoring teams (boat captain and assistant) for the beluga harvest in July 2025.

4. Bowhead

a. 2024 Bowhead Hunts:

- The Total Allowable Harvest (TAH) of Eastern Canada-West Greenland (ECWG) bowhead whales in Nunavut waters is 5 per year. This TAH is shared regionally: 2 per year in each of the Qikiqtaaluk and Kivalliq Regions, and 1 per year in the Kitikmeot Region. However, in 2025, only one bowhead harvest has been conducted in Nunavut waters.
- Both the Kivalliq Region Wildlife Board (KWB) and the Kitikmeot Regional Wildlife Board (KRWB) informed DFO that they had not received any Bowhead Hunt Plans for RWO review and decision. Therefore, no bowhead hunts were conducted in either region in 2025.
- In 2025, the Bowhead Hunt Plan developed by the community of Pangnirtung was approved by the Qikiqtaaluk Wildlife Board (QWB). After Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. (NTI) confirmed the penthrate grenade training was complete, DFO issued a Marine Mammal Fishing Licence to Pangnirtung's Bowhead Hunt Captain.
- On July 26, 2025, the Pangnirtung whalers landed a 45-foot (13.7 meter) pregnant female bowhead at Kekerten Islan. Butchering took place during low tides between July 26th to July 29th. Dr. Pierre-Yves Daoust and Dr. Laura Bourque ([Canadian Wildlife Health Cooperative](#)) assisted the whalers in collecting body measurements and biological samples from both the mother and her 3-foot (94 cm) unborn calf.
- DFO would like to thank the Pangnirtung whalers for providing harvest information and biological samples from this whale for scientific analysis.

b. Bowhead Co-Management:

- DFO's Sustainable Fisheries Framework requires the development of Limit Reference Points (LRP) for key regional fisheries. LRPs have not yet been developed for the ECWG bowhead fishery, because aerial surveys cannot include their vast geographic range.
- In response to a DFO Fisheries Management request for Science Advice, a DFO CSAS process took place on January 27, 2025. Inuit co-management representatives from Nunavut (NWMB and NTI) and Nunavik (Nunavik Marine Region Wildlife Board and Makivvik Corporation) were invited to participate in this review of recent peer-reviewed publications about abundance estimates and precautionary management approaches for the ECWG bowhead whale population that specifically examine LRPs.
- The CSAS recommendations and conclusions will be available once the translations are complete, and presented for review and discussion among Bowhead Working Group members.

5. Harvest Reporting

- Timely and accurate reporting is required under the *Fisheries Act*, *Marine Mammal Regulations*, and the *Nunavut Agreement*. Reports of total marine mammal hunting mortality (landed and lost) are essential to develop reliable advice on sustainable harvests. It is strongly recommended that co-management organizations emphasize the importance of harvest reporting and monitoring.
- Staff from the Iqaluit DFO office have contacted all Nunavut HTOs/HTAs and Government of Nunavut (GN) Wildlife Office staff requesting mid-year harvest updates for beluga, walrus, narwhal and bowhead whales for the 2024/25 fiscal year which began on April 1, 2024.
- Due to minimal harvesting reporting for the 2023/24 fiscal year that ended on March 31, 2024, DFO staff have also followed up with HTOs and GN Wildlife Office staff regarding 2023/24 harvest reports.
- Additionally, DFO urges continued reporting of unusual marine mammal occurrences and events for follow up by co-management organizations, such as beached carcasses and ice entrapments.

6. Avian Influenza

- Avian Influenza Virus (AIV) is highly contagious among domestic and wild birds. In the fall of 2024, the GN received reports of sick/dead birds observed near several Nunavut communities which also involved sick/dead marine mammals.
- Canada's national surveillance program for AIV includes the Canadian Wildlife Health Cooperative (CWHC), the GN and other provincial/territorial governments, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, the Public Health Agency of Canada, and Environment and Climate Change Canada – Canadian Wildlife Service.

- In Nunavut, public communications regarding AIV testing are coordinated by the GN (Dept. of Environment and Dept. of Health) and the CWHC.
- In May 2025, DFO finalized an internal communications protocol to assist the GN's response to reports of sick/dead marine mammals. This protocol was developed jointly with the GN, and the CWHC, and aligns with their mandates under the national AIV surveillance program.

Greenland Halibut (Turbot):

1. Cumberland Sound Turbot Management Area (CSTMA):

- The 2025 winter Greenland Halibut Fishery in Cumberland Sound occurred from February to April, with a total of approximately 219 tonnes (t; round weight) landed at the Pangnirtung fish plant.
- In August 2025, DFO received an application for open-water summer fishing in Cumberland Sound and is waiting for the vessel schedule in order issue the licence.
- DFO staff are planning in-person pre-season meetings in Pangnirtung in January 2026, prior to the start of the winter fishery.
- DFO Science is using a Baited Remote Underwater Video system to estimate the number of Greenland Sharks in Cumberland Sound and assess the impact of fishery bycatch mortality on the Greenland Shark population. The project started in 2023 and is scheduled to continue through 2026.

2. Division 0A Inshore:

- DFO issued a licence in the winter of 2025 for on-ice Greenland halibut fishing in the Clyde River and Pond Inlet areas. The licence was issued for 10 t of the available 100 t of quota allocated for inshore fishing within the NAFO division 0A.
- DFO will continue to work with co-managers and fishers regarding future fishing of the 100 t of NAFO Division 0A inshore Greenland halibut quota.

Fish Stocks Provisions:

- On November 9, 2022, DFO shared a proposal with stakeholders for a regulatory amendment to the *Fishery (General) Regulations* to identify the second batch of Major Fish Stocks that would be subject to the Fish Stocks provisions (sections 6.1-6.3) of the *Fisheries Act*. This included Arctic char stocks in Cambridge Bay and Cumberland Sound and Northern and Striped shrimp in the Eastern Assessment Zone (EAZ).
- The Fish Stocks provisions include obligations to maintain Major Fish Stocks identified in regulation at levels necessary to promote their sustainability and to develop and implement rebuilding plans for stocks that have declined to or below their Limit Reference Point.

- DFO staff presented this proposal to the Cambridge Bay Arctic char IFMP Working Group in June 2023 and the Pangnirtung HTO Board in July 2023, with general support for identifying Cumberland Sound and Cambridge Bay char stocks as Major Fish Stocks.
 - If these stocks are prescribed to the Fish Stocks provisions, there would be no immediate management changes as the stocks are considered healthy and the current management of the fishery is sustainable.
- On June 26, 2024, DFO requested an NWMB decision on whether the Board has the authority to approve plans to designate stocks as Major Fish Stocks under the Fish Stocks provisions.
- On July 22, 2024, the NWMB provided a response to this request for decision indicating that the Board considers the process of designating a stock as a Major Fish Stock an internal DFO management process and requested that DFO keep the NWMB informed when adding fish stocks located in the Nunavut Settlement Area or Nunavut-adjacent waters as Major Fish Stocks.
- In January 2025 information regarding Northern shrimp in the EAZ suggested that this stock is part of a larger stock complex, and thus the current stock area description and associated Limit Reference Point is no longer applicable. Given this information, consultation with stakeholders and rightsholders would need to occur before identifying this stock as major with the new proposed stock structure. As a result, Northern and Striped shrimp in the EAZ has been removed from the second batch of Major Fish Stocks.
- The proposal to identify these stocks as Major Fish Stocks was pre-published in *Canada Gazette*, Part I, on October 12, 2024, for a 30-day public comment period that ended on November 11, 2024. No concerns were expressed regarding identifying these Arctic char stocks as major during this public comment period.
- The original proposed timeline to include these stocks in the regulation through publication of *Canada Gazette*, Part II, was spring 2025. There has been a delay in the process and publication of *Canada Gazette*, Part II, is anticipated fall 2025.

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