

SUBMISSION TO THE NUNAVUT WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT BOARD AUGUST 2025

FOR

Information: X

Decision:

Issue: Information regarding plans for consultation and decision-making regarding the possible addition of the Greenland Shark (*Somniosus microcephalus*) to the List of Wildlife Species at Risk on the *Species at Risk Act* (SARA).

Background:

As per 3.5 of the Harmonized Listing Process, the Department of Fisheries & Oceans (DFO) is informing the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board (NWMB) of the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) assessment results and a DFO intent to consult on the Greenland Shark.

The Greenland Shark:

The Greenland Shark is found primarily throughout the North Atlantic Ocean and adjacent Arctic waters. Population estimates are currently uncertain and estimated declines range widely due to the uncertainty in life history parameters and mortality estimates. Incidental catch (bycatch) in a wide variety of fishing gear such as; trawl, demersal longline, and gillnet fisheries throughout its range is a major source of mortality. The extreme life history traits of the species, including remarkably slow growth, late maturity, and longevity, make them particularly high-risk to overfishing. Habitat changes due to climate change impacts are occurring at an accelerated rate and Greenland Shark may experience changes to habitat that could impact their distribution, fitness, and population dynamics in Canada. The species may become Threatened if these threats are not effectively mitigated or managed.

COSEWIC assessed the Greenland Shark as Special Concern in May 2025.

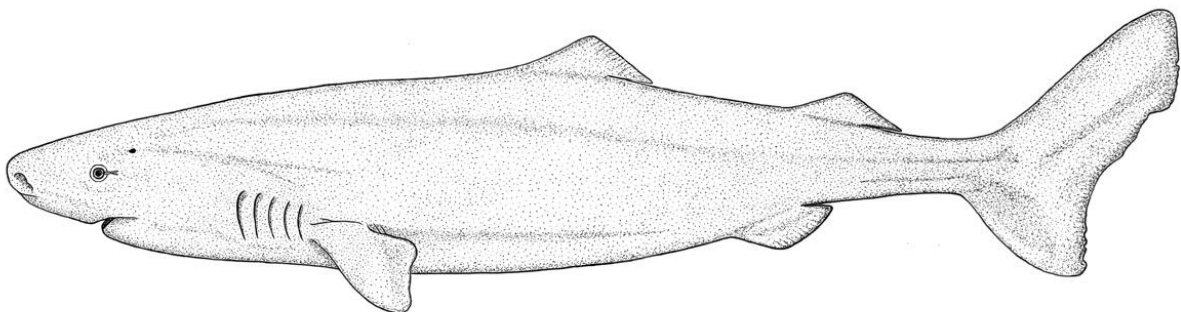


Figure 1: Greenland Shark

Distribution

Greenland Shark is found primarily throughout the North Atlantic Ocean and adjacent Arctic waters. It occurs in deep waters of the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean, northward along the eastern US and extending throughout Atlantic Canada and the eastern Canadian Arctic, across Greenland and Iceland, and in the east from France and extending north throughout the Northeast Atlantic to Svalbard and as far east as northern Russia. In Canada, a seasonally higher abundance of Greenland Shark has been observed in inshore fjords of Nunavut in summer months. Figure 2 shows the distribution of Greenland Shark in Canadian Atlantic Ocean waters.

Requirements for Consultation and Approval

Article 5.2.34 (f) of the *Nunavut Agreement* states that the NWMB shall, at its discretion, approve the designation of rare, threatened or endangered species. As well, Section 27 (2) (c) of the SARA requires that before making a recommendation as to whether or not to add a species at risk to Schedule 1, the Minister must consult the Board for species found in an area in respect of which the Board is authorized by a land claims agreement to perform its functions.

Consultation and Approval

DFO is planning to consult with Hunters and Trappers Organizations in Nunavut adjacent to the distribution of the Greenland Shark to ensure that any listing decision is made in full consideration of their views. DFO may be holding workshops in the winter. Comments received will be used by the Minister to decide whether to recommend legal listing of the Greenland Shark. A consultation summary will be provided to the NWMB when consultations are complete.

Approval

After public consultations are completed, a summary of consultations will be provided to the Board. The Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada (with support from DFO) will seek a 5.2.34(f) decision from the Board with regard to the listing.

Prepared by:

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Date:

August 28, 2025

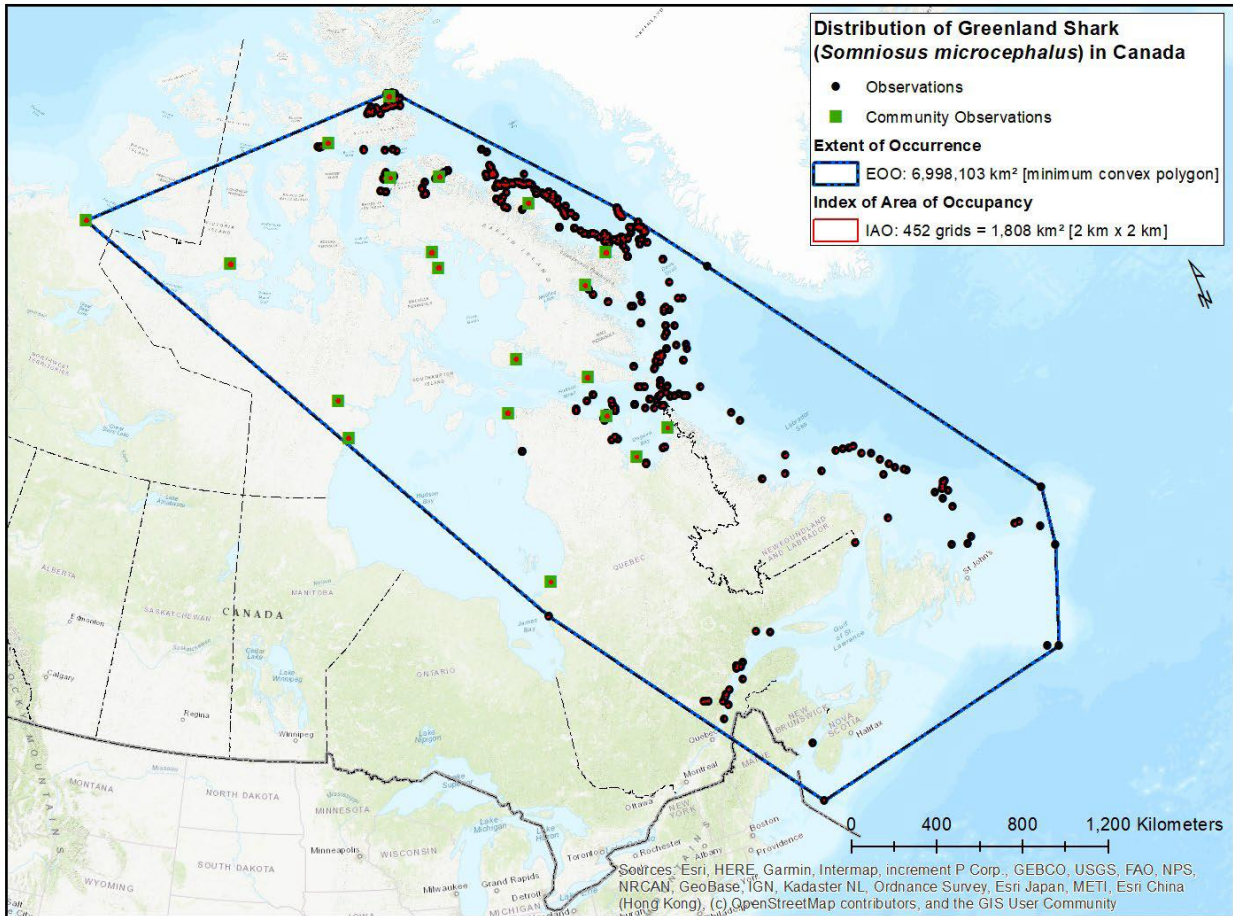


Figure 2. Distribution of Greenland Shark. Reprinted from COSEWIC (2025).

Reference:

COSEWIC. 2025. **IN PRESS.** COSEWIC assessment and status report on the Greenland Shark *Somniosus microcephalus* in Canada. Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada. Ottawa. xiii + 50 pp. (<https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/species-risk-public-registry.html>).