

# **HTO Consultations on muskox distribution and abundance, Muskox Management Units MX-09**

April 2019



Department of Environment, Government of Nunavut/Iqaluit, Nunavut

## Executive Summary

Representatives of the Government of Nunavut, Department of Environment (DOE) conducted a consultation with the Hunters and Trappers Organizations (HTO) of Kugluktuk on April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2019. The primary purpose of these consultations was to inform the community members of the results of the 2017 abundance estimate of MX-09 and discuss management recommendations that the Kugluktuk HTO would like to see implemented. The consultation was also a way to receive and collect additional local and traditional knowledge insight to complement the survey report.

The Kugluktuk HTO agrees with the survey result, which show the muskox number in the management unit has remained stable for the past 20 years. The current Total Allowable Harvest (TAH) has remained consistent with 20 tags or a harvest rate of 3.4%. However, only 15 of these 20 tags were used recently, lowering the harvesting rate. Harvesters have not requested an increase in the TAH, therefore, the HTO would like to keep this *status quo*. However the HTO can implement their own management initiatives and reduce the tags given to the members if need be. The DOE support this recommendation, and will offer to work closely with the community. If harvesters see an increase or a decrease in the number of muskox in MX-09, this could trigger the initiation of a new population survey for MX-09. Otherwise, the next muskox population survey for MX-09 should be done in 2023.

This report attempts to summarize the comments made by HTO board members during the consultation on April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2019.

## **Preface**

This report represents the Department of Environment's best efforts to accurately capture all of the information that was shared during consultation meetings with the Hunters and Trappers Organizations.

The views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect those of the Department of Environment, Nunavut or Government of Nunavut.

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## **1.0 Report Purpose and Structure**

This report is intended to collate and summarize comments, questions, concerns, and suggestions raised during a consultation held with the Kugluktuk HTO on April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2019 about the results of the muskox distribution and abundance survey of the muskox management unit MX-09 and management recommendations. The summary and notes herein only reflect what was shared during the meeting.

## **2.0 Purpose of Consultations**

The primary purpose of the meetings organized and led by DOE was to engage the HTOs in an ongoing dialogue on the survey results of the muskox management unit MX-09 and solicit feedback on the report, gather additional local knowledge, and discuss future management recommendations. The results from the 2017 population survey were communicated during the meeting. The affected HTO was consulted as the designated representatives of the hunting community under the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement (NLCA).

### **2.1 Format of Meetings**

The meeting was held during the evening and was one hour in length. Meetings were facilitated and led by the Regional Biologist, who was also the primary presenter. The Regional Wildlife Manager was present as an observer, and the Wildlife Technician as a note taker. The presentation format was informal and HTO Board members were invited to ask questions or raise concerns and recommendations. It was an open dialogue.

## **3.0 HTO Consultation Summary**

The objectives of the meeting were made clear to the HTO and the report was provided to them prior to the meeting. By doing so the HTO Board members were already familiar with the information and could be engaged in a more meaningful way. The muskox has an important economic value and has become an important alternative source of country food in a time that caribou meat has become rarer. Several members of the HTOs stated the importance of sustaining the muskox to a certain number to assure the continuation of their harvest rights and food security.

### 3.1.1 Kugluktuk HTO Consultation Summary-2019

**Issues:** Muskox distribution and abundance, muskox management unit MX-09. West of the Coppermine River, August 2017. The muskox number in this management unit is stable.

**Purpose of the Consultations:**

A consultation was organized in Kugluktuk on April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2019. The primary purpose of the meeting was to engage the HTO in an ongoing dialogue on the muskox survey, review the report, and talk about the future management recommendation. The meeting was an opportunity to inform the audience that the DOE does recommend a TAH of 20 based on the available information, but an increase of the current harvest is not possible at this time.

**Date:** April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2019

**Representatives:**

DOE: Terry Milton, Lisa-Marie Leclerc and Kevin Methuen, Russell Akeeagok, Allen Niptanatiak

HTO: Bobby Anavilok, Kevin Klengenber, Jacob Palogongak, Myles Peterson, Alannah, Stanley Carpenter, Jayko Palongayak, Larry Adjun (Chair).

Polar Knowledge Canada: Lynda Orman

Member of MLA: Mila Akeeagok

**Summary of the Discussion:**

During the presentation, HTO members made comments and asked questions to ensure an understanding of the research methodology and results. The HTO members expressed concerns regarding the time of the year in which the survey was realized. Traditional knowledge says that the muskox herd is harder to find because the number of lone bulls increase in late-summer. The bulls are nice and fat and they are getting ready to fight during the rut. Therefore, it would be recommended to do future surveys outside of the rut.

The HTO members gave additional information on the muskox lungworm. Local Inuit saw muskox with bloody noses way back in the 1970s. However, it took a decade for the Government to start a study investigating this clinical cause of the symptoms. Thus, in 1997, following studies determined the cause of the nose bleeding, which was associated with a parasitic lungworm that lodged itself in the lung host by creating nodules. Once affected, the muskox has difficulty running, as his pulmonary capacity is compromised.

The HTO members were not surprised by the relatively high number of Grizzly Bear sighting during the survey. However, they would like to specify that the predators are not the only one to blame for stabilizing the muskox population. Some muskoxen may have moved away to the tree line, maybe to move away from the area infested by lungworm. Also with the recent forest fire experienced in Yellowknife, the muskox might change distribution to avoid the smoke or burnt areas.

Muskox movements are not well understood. Biologists ear tagged muskox at Napatilik Lake in early 1990s, and a muskox with a tag was seen again in 2017 close to Contwoyto Lake. Muskox when scared

can run for four to five miles. There is muskox in the tree line and around Great Bear Lake. It appears that they are moving south towards the border with and into the Northwest Territories.

Since there are muskoxen in the Northwest Territories, some questions were asked about the current monitoring of muskoxen by the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT). The HTO board members were very interested to know if the muskox in the Northwest Territories belongs to the same population as the muskox in MX-09. Thus, they would like to have a meeting and work with the GNWT. Concerning the harvest rate, the tags are currently not all being filled. This year, all the tags were assigned, but only 7 were reported harvested out of the 20. In addition, the last ten years the quota has not been filled, 15 tags used over a maximal number of 20, and there was no reports of harvesters expressing concerns. . The HTO would like maintain the status quo for MX-09 with 20 TAH.. . However, the HTO has the discretion to use their by-law to implement a community-based management action; a small moratorium for 1 or 2 years to help the muskox population increase, since it has remained stable, without growth, for so long.

**Recommendation to the GN:**

The HTO of Kugluktuk recommended maintaining the *status quo* for MX-09 with 20 TAH. If the harvesters and users report any change in observations indicating an increase or decrease in the population, they would like to have a population survey done before 2023.

## 4.0 Conclusion- Next Steps

The DOE will finalize the muskox report with the additional comments provided during the meeting and distribute it to the co-management partners. When planning the 2019 muskox survey on the mainland, DOE will consider the comments and suggestions made during the HTO consultation, as to avoid the time of the rut.

Since 2017, population survey results have been discussed at the Kitikmeot Regional Wildlife Board Annual Meeting in 2018 and now with the HTOs and other co-management partners. Key information on the stability of the muskox number in the muskox management unit MX-09 has been communicated. In addition, recommendations to the NWMB would be made to keep the current TAH status as is, according to this position, which is supported by the Kugluktuk HTO. The consultation process for this management recommendation is summarized in this report.



# Appendix I

## PowerPoint Presentation 2019



### Muskox distribution and abundance Muskox Management Unit, MX09, West of the Coppermine River

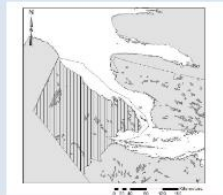
Kugluktuk HTO

Lisa-Marie Leclerc  
Government of Nunavut  
Department of Environment

April, 2019

### Survey Area

- MX-09, last estimate of 2007 was 598 muskoxen, with 159 adults on transect.
- Concerns, hunters seem to go harvesting muskox in the area to compensate for the lack of caribou.



### Monitoring

- Survey completed in August 25 to September 02, 2017 (16% coverage)
- 103 adults counted and 87 on transect.
- 58% of the groups were small groups, of 2 to 11 adults.
- The calf to adult muskox ration was 38 calves/100 adults.

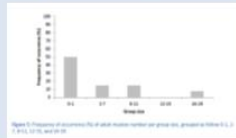
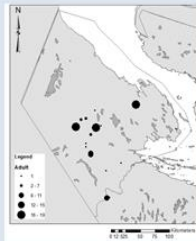
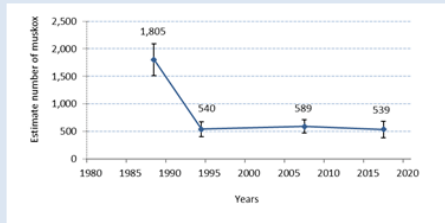


Figure 5. Proportion of observed 100% of adult muskoxen numbers per group size. Prepared by Nelson et al. 7, 8/15, 12/15, and 2017.

### MX09, 2017 New population estimate

Muskox number seems to be stable  
with an estimate of  
 $539 \pm 150$  SE



### Predators

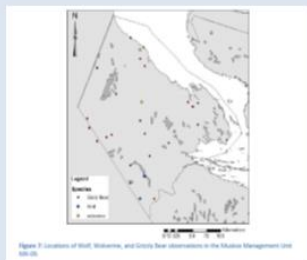


Figure 7. Locations of Wolf, Wolverine, and Golden Eagle observations in the Muskox Management Unit. 2017.

### Managements- Discussion

What is the HTO's management objective?

Are all tags being filled?

What is the community need?

