

December 14th, 2011

**The Honourable Keith Ashfield**  
**House of Commons**  
Minister of Fisheries and Oceans  
Parliament Buildings, Wellington Street  
Ottawa, Ontario  
Canada K1A 0A6



**Subject: Request to hunt one bowhead whale in the Nunavik Marine Region in 2012**

Minister Ashfield,

On December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2011 a request by the *Regional Nunavimmi Uumajulirijit Katujjiqatigiinninga* (RNUK) to harvest a bowhead whale was presented to the Nunavik Marine Region Wildlife Board (NMRWB) during its 11<sup>th</sup> Regular Meeting in Inukjuak, QC.

The meeting was attended by all members and staff of the NMRWB, as well as representatives from the RNUK, DFO, Environment Canada, and the Makivik Corporation. All participants discussed the proposal (included as an appendix to this letter), two scientific advisory reports published by the Canadian Scientific Advisory Secretariat in 2007 and 2008, as well as statistics on harvests outside of the NMR that were provided by DFO management staff. These considerations include the following:

- A request by the RNUK to harvest one (1) bowhead whale in 2012
- The most recent partial population estimate is 14,400 (95% CI = 4,811-43,105)
- The recommended potential biological removal that ensures a high level of risk avoidance of is of 18 bowhead per year
- The annual human induced mortality other than by Nunavik Inuit is < 10 per year
- A DFO recommendation that hunts should target juvenile bowhead whales (between 7.5 m and 13.5 m or between 24.6 feet and 44.3 feet in total length, or ≤ 4.5 m or 14.8 feet in skull length)
- The risk of taking adult females is reduced when hunters avoid animals longer than 16.2 m or 53.2 feet in total length (> 5.4 m or 17.7 feet in skull length)

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Having considered the information presented and discussions held during the meeting, the Board Members of the NMRWB voted in favour of a resolution to approve allow Nunavik Inuit to hunt and land one (1) or strike two (2) bowhead whales (whichever occurs first) in the Nunavik Marine Region during 2012 (see # 2011-12-01, in Appendix 2 of this letter). Hence, **the NMRWB proposes that the total allowable take for the Nunavik Marine Region be set at one (1) bowhead whale.**

This decision is well in line with the recommendations made under the precautionary approach framework which suggests a maximum removal of 18 bowhead whales per annum. As such we are confident that the harvest of one bowhead (or the striking of 2 bowhead whales) by Nunavik Inuit in 2012 will not be detrimental to the recovery of this species.

Because the bowhead is not considered a *Presumption as to needs* species (NILCA S.5.3.7) the NMRWB is consequently required to establish a *Basic Needs Level* (BNL) in accordance with sections 5.2.12 to 5.2.14 of the NILCA. **Based on discussions held during the meeting, the NMRWB proposes that the *Basic Needs Level* for Bowhead whale be set at two (2).** The NMRWB will periodically review this BNL and may adjust it to reflect increasing needs of Nunavik Inuit if necessary (as per S.5.2.15)

The submission presented by the RNUK included a resolution indicating that all members were in favour of the hunt taking place in proximity to the community of Kangiqsujaq, where bowhead whales occur most often. It is the NMRWB's understanding that there will be a shared-allocation of the BNL to all communities participating in the hunt. As such, identification of hunters that will take part in the hunt and their specific roles will be the responsibility of the planning committee assigned to this task by the RNUK and LNUKs involved. It is essential that a whaling captain be indentified in advance of the hunt.

**It is recognized that under the NILCA (S.5.3.19) the bowhead whale hunt is subject to licensing by the responsible management agency, in this case the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Quebec Region.** As such, in the event that you support this proposal the NMRWB will ensure that the RNUK and LNUKs are notified that a DFO license is required prior to the hunt.

**The NMRWB also proposes the following non-quota limitations** for inclusion, as conditions to the hunt, in the DFO-issued license for the 2012 bowhead whale hunt (any additional conditions are subject to approval by the NMRWB, as per S.5.2.19):

- A hunt plan will be developed and submitted to the NMRWB and DFO no later than May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2012
- The hunt shall take place between August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2012 and October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2012

- All necessary whaling equipment (as will be detailed in the hunt plan) must be on hand prior to the start of the hunt
- A whaling captain will be named in advance and will be responsible for coordinating the hunt
- The primary killing device will be a penthrite grenade that has been endorsed by the Fishery Officer on-site
- A secondary weapon will be in each of the boats involved in the hunt.
- No person shall hunt, strike or kill a bowhead whale with a firearm other than those that have been endorsed by the on-site Fishery Officer
- The whaling captain shall make every effort to have the bowhead whale killed as quickly and efficiently as possible.
- No person who has killed or wounded a bowhead shall fail to make a reasonable effort to retrieve the whale without delay.
- No person shall hunt, strike or kill a bowhead calf or any bowhead whale accompanied by a calf. A bowhead calf is a bowhead that is less than 7.5 metres in length (25 feet)
- The hunt and processing of the whale shall be conducted in accordance with the hunt plan approved by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Quebec Region.
- No person shall waste any part of a harvested bowhead that is suitable for food.

We thank you in advance for your consideration of the Nunavik Marine Region Wildlife Board's decision regarding non-quota limitations, total allowable take and basic needs level for bowhead whales.

Sincerely,



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Johnny Oovaut  
Chairperson, NMRWB

Cc. Paulusie Novalinga – RNUK, President  
Caroline Girard – Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Aboriginal Fisheries Coordinator