



Fisheries and Oceans
Canada

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Mr. Iola Metuq
Chairperson
Nunavik Marine Region Wildlife Board
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Inukjuak QC
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Mr. Fred Tomatuk
Chairperson
Eeyou Marine Region Wildlife Board
PO Box 580
6 Chief Isaiah Salt Road Waskaganish QC
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Re: Request for Decision regarding the Extension of the Nunavik Beluga Management Plan and next Management Plan Public Hearings

Dear Iola, Fred,

On behalf of the Eastern Hudson Bay beluga working group, we are writing to you today to formally request decisions from the Nunavik Marine Region Wildlife Board (NMRWB) and the Eeyou Marine Region Wildlife Board (EMRWB) on the extension of the Nunavik beluga management plan and the holding of public hearings for the adoption of new management measures following the expiry of the current plan, which is set to expire on January 31, 2027.

As we are all aware, beluga management in Nunavik is in a critical state, both from a time and a conservation perspective. The identification of the Belcher Islands – Eastern Hudson Bay (BEL-EHB) stock in 2022 has added interjurisdictional complexities for the development of new management measures, in addition to increasing the downward trend observed by Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) on the said BEL-EHB beluga stock. DFO and the Boards have expressed conservation concerns regarding the BEL-EHB stock, in particular with repeated exceeding the harvest threshold during the course of the current plan and the Total Allowable Take in Eastern Hudson Bay in summer 2026.

As expressed in previous meetings of the Boards, we are ready and committed to working with the Boards to address the current situation with the level of caution required to ensure that any management measures, either short or long term, are well understood, accepted and implemented by harvesters and therefore provide the best chance of conserving the BEL-EHB stock for generations to come while supporting reconciliation between DFO and Nunavimmiut. Co-management partners require time to prepare for public hearings on a new plan. This includes for Makivvik and the Anguvigaq to meet with the EHB Arc communities to discuss the BEL-EHB stock situation, and to develop plans for the strategic use of the Harvesters Support Grant to favour harvest from other beluga stocks. It also includes the coordination efforts being spearheaded by DFO to convene a working group between Nunavut and Nunavik co-management partners to develop a coherent, sustainable, equitable and Inuit-led management approach for the BEL-EHB stock. While informal conversations have been held and dates considered, an interjurisdictional meeting specific to beluga has yet to take place. Therefore, further time is required to help align, to the extent possible, any new Nunavik measures with such transboundary management efforts.

In this context, **the Eastern Hudson Bay beluga working group hereby requests to the Boards:**

- That the current management plan be extended, without any changes, for a period of 7 months, until August 31, 2027. As the spring harvest in Hudson Strait and Northeast Hudson Bay is understood to be less impactful on the BEL-EHB stock, given that it accounts for approximately 14% and 22% of the harvest, respectively, as opposed to 33% and 52% in the fall. The working group is in agreement that a 7 month extension would be an appropriate compromise between the need to address the current conservation concerns while making sure that harvesters are well prepared for any new management measures. Our concern is that an introduction of interim measures prior to the development of a new management plan might only create confusion among resource users and deplete our capacity and resources instead of focusing on the development and communication of a future plan with communities.
- That public hearings on the next management plan be held in winter 2027, to allow enough time for the above-mentioned activities led by the co-management partners to take place while providing sufficient time for the Boards-Minister decision-making process to unfold prior to the fall 2027 harvest.

While the Boards consider these two requests, we will be working on the co-development of a new management plan to submit at the Boards' public hearings in winter 2027. We are contemplating submitting a plan with a duration of 2 to 3 years to allow sufficient time for co-management partners and hunters to adapt to the new management measures while providing sufficient flexibility in adjusting such measures as the conservation status of the BEL-EHB evolves. The co-development of a proposed plan will be done on a good faith and technical basis while our respective organizations' leadership will retain their full independence in the context of the public hearings and Boards-Minister decision making process. Fisheries and Oceans Canada officials, as members of the working group participating in their professional capacity, have helped develop and support the recommendations of the group. However, the decision to act on, or reject these recommendations remains the discretion of the Minister of Fisheries.

Lastly, we are committed on proceeding with a proposed plan for Nunavik in this timeframe, regardless of the time that may be necessary for the coordination with Nunavut co-management partners. That said, we wish to stress that this request for decision to your Boards as well as any resulting management system in no way undermines the paramount task of developing coherent, sustainable and equitable management measures with Nunavut.

Best regards,

**Laurie
Beaupré**

Digitally signed by
Laurie Beaupré
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Billy Palliser
President
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**hale,
michael**

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Michael Hale
Senior Regional Fisheries
Management Officer
DFO

Cc: Gabriel Nirlungayuk, Director, Department of Wildlife and Environment, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc.
Kooloola Pitsiulak, Executive Director, Qikiqtaaluk Wildlife Board
Jason Akearok, Executive Director, Nunavut Wildlife Management Board
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