



September 26, 2025

The Honourable Joanne Thompson
Minister of Fisheries and Oceans
200 Kent St.
Station 15N100
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0E6

Subject: Extension of the 2021-2026 Beluga Management System in the Nunavik Marine Region, including the areas of overlap with the Eeyou Marine Region.

Dear Minister Thompson,

As the Chairs of the Nunavik Marine Region Wildlife Board (NMRWB) and the Eeyou Marine Region Wildlife Board (EMRWB), we write to inform you of our Boards' decisions regarding the extension of the current 2021-2026 Beluga Management System in the Nunavik Marine Region, including the overlap with the Eeyou Marine Region. This decision is provided pursuant to section 5.5.6 of the Nunavik Inuit Land Claims Agreement (NILCA) and section 15.3.1 of the Eeyou Marine Region Land Claims Agreement (EMRLCA).

Decision on Extension

On March 21, 2025, the Anguvigaq submitted a Request for Decision to the NMRWB and EMRWB, wherein they asked that the 2021-2026 Beluga Management System be extended. The Anguvigaq asserted that an extension was needed for the following reasons:

- 1) To allow time for the completion and publication of Inuit Knowledge studies and scientific information, such as the 2024 aerial survey results. All of which are imperative for a meaningful review and renewal of the 2021-2026 Beluga Management System.
- 2) To provide time for communities and parties to process the new science and the Inuit knowledge studies, and to prepare meaningfully for the public hearing process that would be used for the review and renewal of the 2021-2026 Beluga Management System.

In response to the Request for Decision, the NMRWB and EMRWB launched a written public hearing to consider extending the 2021-2026 Beluga Management System by one year. During the

hearing, the Boards received submissions from Makivvik, DFO, Anguvigaq, Nunavut Tunngavik, and the Cree Trappers' Association. All submissions broadly favoured the one-year extension. However, the Anguvigaq, DFO, and Makivvik each had divergent views with respect to whether any interim modifications needed to be made to the 2021-2026 Beluga Management System during the extension period.

The hearing information and the hearing record can be found at <https://nmrwb.ca/2025belugamanagementsystemextension-hearing/>.

On June 5, 2025, both Boards met jointly to review and deliberate over the information and decided to extend the 2021–2026 Beluga Management System by one year, until **January 31, 2027**.

The Boards believe that an extension would preserve stability in the existing system while allowing time for:

- incorporation of new Inuit Knowledge and scientific information that are now being finalized, as well as consultation on that information;
- full engagement of communities and co-management partners in developing the next multi-year framework; and
- further review of harvest and monitoring results from 2021–2025.

The Boards considered that the current system already contains tools that allow for interim adjustments to measures, if necessary, and are prepared to assess and decide on interim adjustments within their jurisdiction as requested by co-management partners. In summary, the extension affords continuity, as well as time for meaningful engagement and preparation for the transition to the next set of management decisions.

Harvest Threshold Issue

The Boards' decision on the extension was made prior to the June 2025 Beluga Annual Review. The 2025 Annual Review highlighted many challenges in relation to the 2021-2026 Beluga Management System. It is now clear that the new scientific information available undermines some of the key assumptions underlying the 2020–2021 decisions and complicates the assessment of the effectiveness of current measures. Further, we learned that the East Hudson Bay Beluga harvest threshold was exceeded in 2024, adding to the concerning trend of it being exceeded nearly every year of the current system. Preliminary results from the most recent aerial survey (which are not yet public nor accessible to rights holders) suggest stock decline. These points raise both conservation concerns and questions regarding the effective implementation of the system. While these issues require attention, there is no single or immediate regulatory solution that the Boards can provide as a response. Addressing these issues must be the focus of the review and renewal process and of the upcoming public hearing on beluga management in the NMR. The Boards have taken initial steps by supporting a technical meeting between the Anguvigaq, Makivvik and DFO to identify practical responses. Ultimately, however, any new regulatory measures will require further proceedings and

broad engagement with co-management partners as well as engagement on the issue by regulators outside the NILCA and EMRLCA processes, including those in Nunavut, as they also have responsibilities within their jurisdictions to mitigate risks to the Eastern Hudson Bay stock of Beluga.

Conclusion

We therefore forward our decision on the one-year extension for your consideration under the Agreements. At the same time, we assure you that the Boards are actively engaged with DFO Arctic Region, the Anguvigaq and Makivvik to address concerns with harvest pressure on Eastern Hudson Bay Beluga in Nunavik through further technical work and dialogue, and we are collectively preparing for a comprehensive hearing on the renewal of the beluga management decisions for the NMR, including the area of overlap with the EMR.

Sincerely,



Iola Metuq

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Fred Tommatuk

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Cc. Amy Amos, Regional Director General, DFO Arctic Region
Sylvain Vézina, Directeur général régional,
Michael Hale, Indigenous Fisheries Coordinator, DFO Arctic Region
Patt Hall, Regional Senior Fisheries Management Officer, DFO Arctic Region
Martine Giangioppi, Senior Advisor, Liaison with Nunavik, Eeyou Istchee, and Mushkegowuk Territory, DFO Arctic Region
Caroline Sauvé, Aquatic Sciences Biologist, DFO Région du Québec

Attachments:

1. **Extension of the 2021–2026 Beluga Management System**
 - a. NMR –NMRWB Resolution #2025-06-03, Cree/Inuit Overlap Area – Inuit Zone:
NMRWB Resolution #2025-06-09, Cree/Inuit Overlap area – Joint Zone: NMRWB Resolution #2025-06-10
 - b. Cree/Inuit Overlap area – Joint Zone: EMRWB Resolution #2025- 01A