



News release

Sustainable Development Minister Supports NWMB decision on M'Clintock Channel polar bear population

IQALUIT, Nunavut (January 17, 2001) –Sustainable Development Minister Olayuk Akesuk says he supports the decision of the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board on the quota for harvesting M'Clintock Channel polar bears.

“The Nunavut Wildlife Management Board had a very difficult decision to make,” Minister Akesuk said. “Its decision reflects a good balance between conservation and the recognition that polar bear harvesting is of significant cultural, social and economic importance to Nunavummiut.”

The research conducted by the Department of Sustainable Development during the past three years has shown that the estimated size of the M'Clintock Channel polar bear population is approximately 288 bears, significantly less than previous estimates of 700 animals. The NWMB decided that the current quota of 32 bears harvested by the communities of Cambridge Bay, Taloyoak and Gjoa Haven be reduced to 12 bears in 2000/2001 and that a moratorium be put into effect for 2001/2002.

“Establishing a quota of 12 bears for this hunting season will bring the harvest level to a more sustainable level, and implementing a moratorium in the following hunting season will begin the process of population recovery” Minister Akesuk said. “These measures will also give us time to work with the affected communities in identifying and developing economic alternatives, before the full impact of the moratorium is felt.”

Minister Akesuk met with the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board earlier this week to discuss the information gathered on the M'Clintock Channel polar bear population. The Department will continue its research program in the M'Clintock Channel for two to three more years to monitor and complete the population estimates and to obtain the information required for a long-term solution for the bear population in the area.

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