



## News Release

### Polar bear studies may be good news for hunters

**IQALUIT, Nunavut (January 18, 2002)** – Sustainable Development Minister Olayuk Akesuk announced today that results from some of the Government of Nunavut’s polar bear studies may be positive news for hunters.

Since 1998, biologists with the Department of Sustainable Development have been assessing polar bear numbers in the populations known as the M’Clintock Channel and Gulf of Boothia.

The department has completed a final analysis of the data collected during these studies. The new estimate for M’Clintock of 284 bears confirms last year’s reports. In the Gulf of Boothia, the new estimate is just more than 1,500 bears; this is significantly higher than the previous estimate, which was based upon studies conducted more than 20 years ago.

“These results bring us some good news,” Minister Akesuk said. “Until recently, our preliminary analyses had indicated that we would need to conduct several more years of field work in these populations in order to develop proper estimates. The new results indicate that the extra fieldwork will not significantly improve what are now considered good estimates. This is good news because it means we can now develop final management plans for these populations without further delay.”

The news about M’Clintock Channel means that a long-term management plan can be developed that will allow this population to increase. A moratorium on hunting is the most likely option. However, the news about the size and status of the Gulf of Boothia population is encouraging.

“There seems to be room to increase the level of sustainable hunting in this population and communities using this population will benefit,” Minister Akesuk said.

The next steps would be to complete final study reports and discuss the results of these studies and the management options in detail with communities. The goal will be to develop new management plans for these populations.

Minister Akesuk also confirmed that the news on Gulf of Boothia would allow the government to seek approval of this population under the *U.S. Marine Mammal Protection Act* sooner than expected.

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