



News Release



Minister Accepts Decisions of the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board on Polar Bear Management

IQALUIT, Nunavut, (January 7, 2005). Nunavut has taken a major step forward in the management and conservation of polar bears. On December 21, 2004, Olayuk Akesuk, Minister of Environment, accepted the decisions of the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board (NWMB) regarding the Polar Bear Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs).

The minister's acceptance of these decisions paves the way for the implementation of the MOUs, and will allow for improvements to the way polar bears are managed in Nunavut. "Polar Bears are a very high profile species," said Akesuk. "They are important to all Canadians, indeed the entire world. It is critical for Nunavut to manage this species in accordance with the principles of conservation."

Polar bears are a key part of the arctic ecosystem, and maintaining their populations at healthy levels is important to the culture of Inuit, and to the economy of Nunavut.

"The management plans that these MOUs represent ensure that Nunavut will have healthy populations of polar bears for future generations of Inuit to benefit from," said Akesuk.

Harry Flaherty, acting Chairperson for the NWMB, added: "The management of polar bears in Nunavut is already widely recognized as being among the best – if not the best – in the world. The essential policy guidelines contained in the 2004 MOUs will assist the NWMB and its co-management partners to continue to wisely manage all 12 polar bear populations located in the Nunavut Territory."

Under the terms of the MOUs, communities agree to follow certain rules and regulations regarding polar bear harvesting. The Government of Nunavut in turn agrees to conduct regular research programs to monitor the health of the populations, to include Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit in decision making, and to manage polar bears cooperatively with Inuit, subject to the jurisdiction of the NWMB.

One of the components most important to communities is that the Total Allowable Harvest (TAH) for most polar bear populations will be increased.

The Regional Wildlife Organizations (RWOs) have the responsibility to allocate the TAH among the communities that harvest from each polar bear population. The changes in TAH levels, and the distribution among communities, is described in the attachment.

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