



News Release

Nunavut to Oppose U.S. Proposal Listing Polar Bears as an Endangered Species

IQALUIT, Nunavut (December 28, 2006) – Nunavut Minister of Environment Patterk Netser, disappointed by the U.S. Department of the Interior proposal to list polar bears as an endangered species under their Endangered Species Act, will make a submission to the proposed listing within the 90 day comment period.

“This listing is not necessary and has the potential to have significant negative impacts on Inuit,” said Netser. “The groups who forced this decision made it clear that they are trying to bring about a change in U.S. climate change policy. They have since said that their intent is not to impact Inuit communities, reminding me of the destruction of the Inuit sealing economy by Greenpeace in the 1980’s - Greenpeace later said that they had not intended to hurt Inuit, but by then it was too late.”

The Government of Nunavut knows that Nunavummiut are concerned about effectively managing polar bears, but these animals not endangered. Of the 12 polar bear populations in Nunavut, 11 are stable or increasing. The most recent survey in Davis Strait, one of the southern polar bear populations, shows high numbers, healthy animals, and high productivity.

“There is the potential for climate change to affect polar bears on a broad scale, but that is theoretical for now,” said Netser. “The reality is, we have plenty of bears and they are doing fine.”

Polar bears were effectively managed by Inuit prior to the arrival of Europeans, and since the 1970’s, government management, in cooperation with Inuit, has been an unparalleled success. In cooperation with co-management boards, the Government of Nunavut conducts regular research; monitors bear condition in all populations, and maintains a strict quota system in which harvest levels are lowered, or raised, based on population size.

The U.S. proposed listing will be open for a 90 day comment period, and a decision on the listing will be made within 12 months.

“Inuit in Nunavut communities have very limited economic opportunities, said Netser. “If this listing goes through, it may impact what in some cases is the main economic activity in a small community, and we will do our utmost to prevent that.”

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