

News Release

Minister Shewchuk and NWMB in Agreement on Baffin Bay TAH

(March 5, 2010 Iqaluit) - The Honourable Daniel Shewchuk, Minister of Environment for the Government of Nunavut, has agreed with the decision of the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board (NWMB) for a phased reduction of the harvest of polar bears in the Baffin Bay region of the territory. However, due to the urgency of the conservation concern, Minister Shewchuk will vary the NWMB decision by putting the lowered quota into effect for the 2010 harvest season, rather than waiting for 2011 as specified in the NWMB decision.

The decision, to reduce the Baffin Bay Total Allowable Harvest (TAH) by 10 bears per year for four years, was made following a very inclusive process. "This decision is a very positive step for the co-management of polar bears in Baffin Bay" said Minister Shewchuk. "Our main priority is to ensure the sustainability of all wildlife for future generations, using the collaborative co-management process outlined in the land claim. The best available information on Baffin Bay polar bear population indicates a conservation concern, and I am pleased to see that the NWMB is in agreement about the need for action."

This management action follows the recently signed Nunavut-Canada-Greenland polar bear MOU, which establishes a joint commission and a user-to-user working group to support the long term sustainable management of this polar bear population.

In addition to the harvest reduction, the NWMB and Minister agree that updated data and additional support for communities is needed. "We are now consulting on new research projects, which will include Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit and produce a new population estimate by 2014," said Minister Shewchuk. "We are also rolling out new programs to help prevent and mitigate damage caused by bears."

Nunavut's wildlife co-management system is outlined in the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement and provides for an inclusive process that allows concerns from all stakeholders to be heard and considered when wildlife decisions are being made.

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MEDIA CONTACT:

Sharina Dodsworth A/Manager of Communications Government of Nunavut, Department of Environment sdodsworth@gov.nu.ca | (867) 975-7749

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