

News Release

Foxe Basin Polar Bear Study Shows Stable, Healthy Subpopulation

IQALUIT, Nunavut (June 26, 2012) – According to the latest study conducted by the Government of Nunavut, Department of Environment's wildlife research team, the Foxe Basin* polar bear subpopulation appears to be stable and in good health.

Consultations to share the results of the 2009 to 2010 Foxe Basin polar bear subpopulation study began this week starting with Hunters and Trappers Organization (HTO) meetings scheduled in Chesterfield Inlet, Repulse Bay, Coral Harbour, Cape Dorset, Kimmirut, Igloolik and Hall Beach. Researchers, representatives from Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, and HTO members will meet to discuss the research findings and potential management implications.

"Foxe Basin is one of many examples of the effectiveness of Nunavut's polar bear co-management system" said the Honourable James Arreak, Minister of Environment. "This is one of several subpopulations in Nunavut that is doing well, and is supporting a sustainable harvest because of our successful and collaborative co-management and monitoring efforts."

Responding to Inuit concerns about the capture and handling of polar bears for research, the Foxe Basin study employed aerial survey methods, and involved Inuit community members as observers. In contrast to the mark-recapture methods typically used to study polar bears, aerial surveying does not involve handling of bears. Study results indicate that aerial surveys can provide reliable and precise estimates of population size, and can be a useful tool for monitoring population trends in Foxe Basin, and other seasonally ice-free areas.

The estimated subpopulation size for Foxe Basin is 2,580 bears, which is comparable to the estimate from the early 1990s, even though annual harvest rates have also remained stable over the past 20 years. Inuit knowledge and scientific observations of polar bear body condition and litter sizes suggest that the subpopulation is healthy overall. The aerial survey results did not provide evidence to suggest that climate change is negatively influencing polar bears in the Foxe Basin area.

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*See attached map.

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Foxe Basin Boundaries

