

What We Heard Report: Sanikiluaq Community Consultations Qikiqtait a potential Marine Protected Area by Ministerial Order

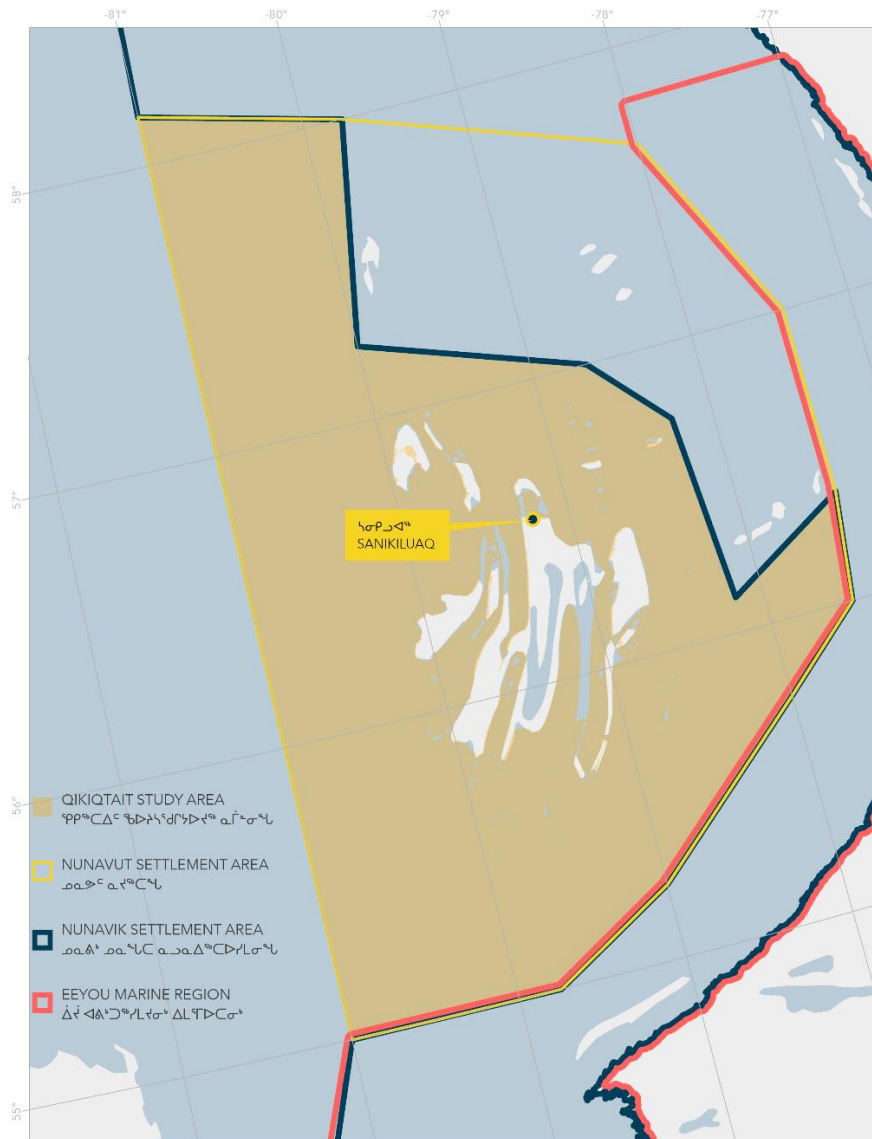


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Acknowledgement

The Qikiqtait and Sarvarjuaq Working Group would like to thank the community of Sanikiluaq for their time and hospitality during our community visits. We would especially like to thank the Hunters and Trappers Association, Hamlet Council, and the Arctic Eider Society for their participation and knowledge-sharing. Finally, we would like to thank the Sanikiluaq Qikiqtait Steering Committee for coordinating these meetings.

Our Team

The Qikiqtait and Sarvarjuaq Working Group consist of members from the Qikiqtani Inuit Association (QIA), Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO), Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC), Transport Canada and the Government of Nunavut. The working group has been supporting the required processes for Sarvarjuaq and Qikiqtait, to create the two potential Marine Protected Areas by Ministerial Order. Only DFO, ECCC, QIA and Government of Nunavut travelled to the communities as part of the consultations for Qikiqtait.

Working Group representatives who participated in the Sanikiluaq consultations included Rosanne D’Orazio (QIA), George Qulaut (QIA – April Meeting only), Bernie MacIsaac (Government of Nunavut), Lisa Pirie (ECCC), Bethany Schroeder (DFO - November meeting only), John Onita (DFO - November meeting only), Lauren Candlish (DFO - April meeting only), Elizabeth Worden (DFO - April meeting only) and Kevin Tallon (DFO - virtually for the November meeting and in person in April).

Executive Summary

Purpose

For the first round of consultations, representatives of the Qikiqtait and Sarvarjuaq Working Group, with members from Qikiqtani Inuit Association (QIA), Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC), and Government of Nunavut (Government of Nunavut), conducted community meetings in Sanikiluaq, Nunavut between November 7 - 8 2023. The second round of consultations took place from April 16 - 18 2024, with representatives from the same organizations and institutions in attendance.

The purpose of these two rounds of consultations was to discuss the collective knowledge of Qikiqtait, the proposed approach to short-term marine conservation by Ministerial Order under the *Oceans Act*, next steps, and also to discuss an Inuit Protected and Conserved Area (IPCA) Qikiqtait Nunangit. The Working Group sought community feedback and support on the Qikiqtait Marine Protected Area (MPA) proposal. An overarching goal for the Working Group was to hear what the community of Sanikiluaq thinks about Qikiqtait MPA proposal, and learn of the community's experiences in and uses of the area.

The purpose of this report is to summarize the feedback provided by community members who attended the meetings, to provide transparency in the process, and to provide a record of the discussions and concerns shared by the community. To confirm accuracy of the information captured, this report was shared with the Sanikiluaq Qikiqtait Steering Committee, Sanikiluaq Hunters and Trappers Association and the Hamlet Council for review. After the Sanikiluaq Qikiqtait Steering Committee have had an opportunity to comment, these reports will be shared more broadly.

Summary of meetings

On November 7, 2023, members of the Sanikiluaq Qikiqtait Steering Committee hosted Working Group members in the Qikiqtait Centre board room and provided updates on community priorities and community-led initiatives. This information was complementary to the focused conversations around marine and terrestrial protection for Qikiqtait. On November 8 2023, Working Group members met with the 18 residents of Sanikiluaq from the Hamlet, Hunters and Trappers Association and the Sanikiluaq Qikiqtait Steering Committee to conduct a day-long meeting featuring presentations on the proposed MPA by Ministerial Order, Fisheries Management, Qikiqtait Terrestrial Protection and the Qikiqtani Regional Conservation Model.

Working Group members also met with the Sanikiluaq general public on November 8 2023 between 7:30 PM and 9:00 PM in the multi-purpose hall of Sanikiluaq High School. The meeting featured a presentation on the proposed MPA by Ministerial Order with DFO under the Oceans Act. QIA's long-term protection vision for Qikiqtait and how this relates to the community's priorities was also discussed. Simultaneous interpretation was provided by the Chair of Sanikiluaq Hunters and Trappers Organization. A total of 96 adult community members were present for this meeting.

On April 16 2024, the Working Group returned to Sanikiluaq in the Qikiqtait Centre to engage in the second round of consultations, with the first day involving presentations from DFO, ECCC and QIA updating community members on progress to date, sharing the proposed boundaries of the MPA, and distributing surveys to determine from community members what activities are taking place within the proposed MPA boundaries. On April 17 2024, the Working Group reconvened in the Qikiqtait Centre during the morning to continue discussions and questions. At 7:30 PM on April 17, a public meeting was held in the multi-purpose hall of Sanikiluaq High

School with simultaneous interpretation into Inuktitut. The meeting featured similar presentations to what was shared with the Sanikiluaq Qikiqtait Steering Committee, the proposed MPA boundaries were shared with the public, and a question period occurred. A total of 54 adult community members were present. On April 18 2024, a presentation from Fisheries Management occurred, and the topic of emerging fisheries was discussed in relation to the proposed MPA and Sanikiluaq's interests.

What we heard overall

Throughout the consultation processes in both November and April, Sanikiluarmit were very engaged in the meetings – sharing their expertise of the area and their perspectives, voicing concerns, providing advice, and raising important questions. Conversations during these consultations were categorized into five main categories for ease of presenting the results in this report.

The first category involved *general discussions on the Qikiqtait Protected Areas and its process*, and the major topics of conversation included community advice on proper consultation practices and the timing of when materials are provided for review; discussions regarding the conservation objectives; and how local, regional and national politics could affect this proposed MPA by Ministerial Order.

The second category was on *protection, regulations and enforcement*, and included topics such as regulations affecting oil, gas, mining and other pollutants; financial and legal responsibility for enforcement in the MPA; how to protect against regional disturbances such as Quebec Hydro, pollution and the freshening of Hudson Bay; and discussions surrounding the specifics of 'small and enclosed bays' and their removal from the proposed MPA boundaries.

The third category encompassed *commercial fisheries*, and many aspects of Sanikiluaq's position on emerging fisheries and conserving local harvesting practices. Discussion points included questions on the licensing phases; bottom contact fisheries; existing licenses in the region; and how Inuit traditional knowledge should be meaningfully incorporated into fisheries regulations.

The fourth category included topics on *rights under the Nunavut Final Agreement, legal and financial implications*. These included discussions surrounding the Inuit Impact and Benefit Agreement; rights protected under the Nunavut Final Agreement; and how regulations in a MPA vs. an IPCA may impact traditional Inuit rights.

Finally, the fifth category encompassed *Sanikiluaq perspectives and priorities*. This was a broader theme, with many topics included that are important to Sanikiluarmit. Some examples of topics are: Special places near Sanikiluaq and how a MPA by Ministerial Order may impact them; infrastructure interests; concern about rivers not flowing and what could be done to improve them; Crown land versus municipal land ownership; and Inuit cultural values and the dissonance often experienced between federal policies and local perspectives in Sanikiluaq.

Overall there was a general consensus that the Sanikiluaq Qikiqtait Steering Committee wanted to be a part of the discussions and plans for protection not only in the short-term of the Ministerial Order MPA but also for the long-term vision of the region. Their desire for a local commercial fishery was expressed and there were concerns that the community would be unable to pursue the commercial fishery if an MPA was put in place. The Sanikiluaq Qikiqtait Steering Committee also wanted to be a part of planning research and monitoring priorities within any protected area, including drafting a workplan for the time frame of the Ministerial Order MPA. Concern was also expressed that an MPA would be created without the community's explicit support.

Meeting Summaries

Hamlet, Hunters and Trappers Association and Sanikiluaq Qikiqtait Steering Committee Meetings November 7 – 8, 2023

On November 7 and 8 2023, 18 members of the Sanikiluaq Qikiqtait Steering Committee, Hunters and Trappers Association and Hamlet Council met with the Qikiqtait Working Group to share knowledge and discuss aspects of short-term and long-term marine and terrestrial protection of Qikiqtait.



Members of the Hamlet Council, Hunters and Trappers Association and the Sanikiluaq Qikiqtait Steering Committee meeting with Working Group Representatives during November 8, 2023 consultations on Qikiqtait MPA

Summary of November 2023 Presentations

Department of Fisheries and Oceans – Marine Planning and Conservation (Bethany Schroeder)

Fisheries and Oceans Marine Planning and Conservation presented the proposed approach for the Qikiqtait Marine Protected Area to the Sanikiluaq Qikiqtait Steering Committee in Sanikiluaq during November 2023. The presentation began by introducing Qikiqtait, as well as discussing short and long-term protection goals and their associated timelines. A major focal point of this presentation was introducing the MPA's draft Conservation Objectives for discussion.

Department of Fisheries and Oceans – Fisheries Management (Kevin Tallon via a virtual presentation)

The purpose of this presentation was to introduce the DFO's Fisheries Management branch, and how it relates to Sanikiluaq's interest in emerging fisheries, and the fisheries licensing process in its three Stages.

Environment and Climate Change Canada (Lisa Pirie)

Environment and Climate Change Canada presented material relevant to the proposed Qikiqtait Terrestrial Protected Area, demonstrating the importance of the area relating to birds, most notably a non-migratory species of Common Eider, and 6 other species at risk that occur in the area. ECCC presented on Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas from their perspective, and what legislation could be used to govern an IPCA with QIA (*Section 7* agreement under *Canada Wildlife Act*).

Qikiqtani Inuit Association (Rosanne d'Orazio)

Qikiqtani Inuit Association presented on the Qikiqtani Regional Conservation Model, discussing the pillars of the model and how they relate to Sanikiluarmit, the proposed MPA, and a future IPCA. The presentation focused on Inuit stewardship, Indigenous-led governance, infrastructure support and fisheries reconciliation. Programs for monitoring and regional governance such as the Nauttiqsuqtiit Program were also covered.

Sanikiluaq Public Meeting November 8, 2023

Representatives of the Qikiqtait and Sarvarjuaq Working Group met with the community of Sanikiluaq on November 8, 2023 between 7:30 pm and 9:00 pm in the multi-purpose hall of Sanikiluaq High School and discussed the collective knowledge of Qikiqtait and the proposed approach to short-term marine conservation and next steps to advance the designation of Qikiqtait as an MPA Ministerial Order by 2025.

A total of **96 adult** community members were present at this meeting.



Sanikiluaq Public in attendance during November 8, 2023 consultations on Qikiqtait MPA proposal

The meeting featured presentations on:

- Marine Protected Area by Ministerial Order with DFO under the Oceans Act – (DFO – Bethany Schroeder).
- QIA’s long-term vision of protection through an IPCA for Qikiqtait and how this speaks to the community’s priorities
- Interpretation was provided in Inuktitut

Working Group members received responses from Sanikiluaq community members of their interest to participate in the protection of Qikiqtait for future generations. February or March 2024 was communicated by Working Group members as possible return dates for the second community tour to discuss next steps and share proposed regulatory documents and seek community input .

DFO thanked community members for their participation in the meeting and requested feedback on survey for draft Qikiqtait Conservation Objectives.

Hamlet, Hunters and Trappers Association and Sanikiluaq Qikiqtait Steering Committee Meetings April 16 – 18 2024

From April 16 – 18 2024, 19 members of the Sanikiluaq Qikiqtait Steering Committee, Hunters and Trappers Association, and Hamlet Council met with the Qikiqtait Working Group to provide updates from the previous November meetings, present the proposed boundaries for the protected area, learn about the activities taking place in the proposed Qikiqtait study area, and have discussions on multiple aspects of short and long-term protection for Qikiqtait. In response to questions asked regarding the development of an emerging fishery within an MPA boundary, DFO presented important points for consideration.

Summary of April 2024 Presentations

Department of Fisheries and Oceans – Marine Planning and Conservation (Lauren Candlish)

Fisheries and Oceans Marine Planning and Conservation presented updates on the proposed Qikiqtait Marine Protected Area, to the Sanikiluaq Qikiqtait Steering Committee in Sanikiluaq during April 2024. The presentation began with an initial review of background information on Qikiqtait, and discussing short and long-term protection goals, and reviewing the Conservation Objectives. New information presented included the finalized boundaries for the Qikiqtait MPA, and an open discussion of current, ongoing and planned activities taking place within the Qikiqtait MPA boundaries. This discussion was accompanied by the distribution of an activity survey to Sanikiluaq Qikiqtait Steering Committee members.

Environment and Climate Change Canada (Lisa Pirie)

Environment and Climate Change Canada presented updates relevant to the proposed Qikiqtait Terrestrial Protected Area, firstly updating on how ECCC has been involved in Eider duck research to date. ECCC stated they would submit recent data to Arctic Eider Society. In addition, ECCC presented on recent financial support to the Qikiqtait initiative, and pointed out the different designations of land. Finally, ECCC shared information and insights on how terrestrial protection could be put in place.

Qikiqtani Inuit Association (Rosanne d’Orazio and George Qulaut)

The Qikiqtani Inuit Association shared information and updates relevant to the proposed Qikiqtait terrestrial and marine conservation areas. QIA presented on funding and protection in the context of the Inuit Impact and Benefit Agreement, and maps of Qikiqtait Nunangit were discussed in the context of jurisdiction. Different options for how to create an IPCA through existing legislation were presented, and there were conversations on how to create new legislation to ensure adequate Inuit governance of Qikiqtait for the long-term. Finally, the concept of a Qikiqtani Conservation Committee (that would be developed in each of the 13 Qikiqtani communities) was discussed, but is in very early stages.

Department of Fisheries and Oceans – Fisheries Management (Kevin Tallon)

The purpose of this presentation was to introduce everybody to the Marine Conservation Target Program in DFO’s Fisheries Management branch, and how it relates to Sanikiluaq’s interest in emerging fisheries. The fisheries licensing process was shared, with a special focus on the requirements associated with each Stage of the license and how it relates to Sanikiluaq.

Sanikiluaq Public Meeting April 17, 2024

Representatives of the Qikiqtait and Sarvarjuaq Working Group met with the community of Sanikiluaq on April 17, 2024 between 7:30 pm and 9:00 pm in the multi-purpose hall of Sanikiluaq High School. Updates from the first round of consultations were presented, and the proposed boundaries of the Marine Protected Area were shared and discussed. Next steps were shared to outline how the designation of Qikiqtait as an MPA Ministerial Order could occur by 2025.

A total of **54 adult** community members were present at this meeting.



The meeting featured presentations on:

- Marine Protected Area by Ministerial Order with DFO under the Oceans Act (DFO – Lauren Candlish)
- Updates from Environment and Climate Change Canada on the terrestrial components (ECCC – Lisa Pirie)
- Updates from Qikiqtani Inuit Association on the terrestrial IPCA, Qikiqtait Nunangit, the Inuit Impact and Benefit Agreement and long-term protection through an IPCA (QIA – Rosanne D’Orazio and George Qulaut)
- Interpretation was provided in Inuktitut

Questions from the public included comments on the importance of being informed across the community, mismanagement of wildlife in nearby islands, the importance of coming back to communities after sharing information and following up, the desire to be able to charter planes to Sleeper Islands to practice harvesting activities, and how critical it is for people to get out on the land in order for knowledge to continue to get passed across generations.

Community Surveys

November 2023 – Conservation Objectives Survey

During the November 2023 consultations, surveys were handed out to Sanikiluarmit present at the consultations, with 27 respondents in total. The survey consisted of three questions regarding the conservation objectives of the proposed Qikiqtait MPA by Ministerial Order.

For the first question, *'What do you think about this Conservation Objective for Qikiqtait?'*, respondents overall were supportive of the Conservation Objectives, with 18 respondents explicitly expressing support. Some of those respondents stated their support with conditional statements such as 'As long as all the aspects listed are supported', or 'I approve the initiative as long as everything is updated if needed'. Three respondents expressed their desire for a sewing center in Sanikiluaq, and one highlighted the need for a community garage for public use. Four respondents described the importance of the environment and the animals living there, with one expressing concern that a marine environment cannot be guaranteed protection when polluted rivers are flowing in and mixing with it. Finally, two participants had comments, including one saying 'not so fast' and another asking 'how are you getting information and being able to comprehend what the objective for Qikiqtait should be concerning wildlife and weather conditions?'

For the second question, *'Are there other words that could help you connect more to this Conservation Objective?'*, nearly half of the respondents did not have follow-up comments. Five respondents stated that the app SIKU (developed by the residents of Sanikiluaq and the Arctic Eider Society) needs to continue. Four participants requested more outreach to the community, recommending avenues such as the Sanikiluaq Announcements, social media, or creating a website for the MPA. One participant requested that the PowerPoint presentation be more clear, and one participant requested a research kit. Finally, one resident restated the need for a community sewing center, and another cautioned that Qikiqtait has many gravesites.

For the third question, *'Is there anything else you would like to tell us today?'*, roughly half (15) of the respondents did not have further comments, with one saying 'Just do what would make a better future'. One participant asked if this organization would be doing something to the land, and another expressed frustration that the Working Group was interested in their land, stating they would never go south and impose anything on southern lands, and just wanted Qikiqtait to be left alone. Four participants stated that they wanted to keep consuming country food and harvesting. Some comments included: The Government of Nunavut needing a plan to respond to emergencies; that SIKU should get more funding as well as Elders teaching younger generations Inuit culture; that cabins are needed in the Belcher islands for hunters' survival; and that all variables (such as climate change, government, local people) should be kept in mind as this progresses into the future. Finally, one participant asked that if that animals were sick, was it because of water contaminated with garbage?

April 2024 – Activity Survey

During the April 2024 consultations, surveys were handed out to Sanikiluarmit present at the consultations, with 16 respondents in total. The survey consisted of 11 questions about local use of the Qikiqtait area. The purpose of the survey was to document the current and ongoing local activities being undertaken within the proposed boundaries of the MPA so that they may be included in the regulation and allowed to continue. Any activities falling under the description of Inuit harvesting rights in the Nunavut Settlement Area would not be subject to any restrictions and can continue unaffected by the MPA.

10 of the respondents answered that they were beneficiaries of the *Nunavut Agreement*, one said they were not, and five responses were left blank. 14 participants said they brought tourists to the Qikiqtait Study Area for guiding, outfitting, sport hunting or other types of tourism. 13 people said they harvested plants along the shoreline to sell and 12 people said they harvested Eider duck down to sell. When asked if they fished in the Qikiqtait Study Area for the purpose of selling their catch, 12 people said yes. When asked about traditional harvesting and travel activities such as fishing for food, hunting for country food, using the water and sea ice for methods of transportation, camping and whale/bird watching, 15 people said 'yes' to each question. Other activities identified by community members in written form included: Water monitoring, water samples, salinity studies, contaminant research, film-making, education / outreach, recreation, benthic invertebrate bottom contact harvesting, timelapses for oceanographic, weather and environmental purposes, and monitoring.

It is important to note that during the April 2024 consultations, it was expressed that the surveys should be worded differently (especially in Inuktitut – the translations did not capture the intent of the survey). It was also recommended that the surveys be shared to a select group prior to distribution so that they may be fine-tuned to be culturally relevant.

What We Heard

General discussion on the Qikiqtait Marine Protected Area and the process

November Meeting

- Question regarding timeline of Ministerial Order – is it guaranteed by 2025?
 - Response: Partners are working towards it, but recognize many steps must be completed first
- Question regarding upcoming federal election and how that may affect creation of MPA
 - Response: Commitments to Inuit within signed Inuit Impact and Benefit Agreements and Project Finance for Permanence will be upheld by the Government of Canada if they are finalized and implemented prior to the upcoming federal election. If these agreements are not finalized before the election, the elected government may choose not to advance these agreements and commitments promised may not be honoured by the new government. Similarly, if the Qikiqtait and Sarvarjuaq study areas have not been designated by Ministerial Order regulations prior to the election, the elected government may choose not to pursue conservation measures for these areas.
- Question if Conservation Objectives applied to Terrestrial Areas
 - Response: they only apply to Marine Areas in MPA
- Committee members want the inclusion of “future generations” in Conservation Objectives.
 - Response: DFO committed to look for additional feedback about how they can incorporate continuity between generations in the Conservation Objectives.
- Comment from the Hunters and Trappers Association Chair that the draft Conservation Objectives were consistent with the priorities of the Sanikiluaq Qikiqtait Steering Committee and reflected community vision.
- Committee members’ showed support for marine conservation in Qikiqtait.
- Committee members’ showed strong support for terrestrial protection through agreement with Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) for an IPCA.

April Meeting

- Comment on how public needs to be consulted properly in order for information to be shared in timely manner
- Comment on how presentations need to be shared well in advance of meetings in order to give the Sanikiluaq Qikiqtait Steering Committee ample time to understand and put together questions
- Comment on how discussions about new committees and organizational structures regarding MPA (Qikiqtani Conservation Committee for ex.) are maybe not needed because Sanikiluaq has several committees in place already that are functioning decision-making bodies. Why not use existing structures that community has put in place?
 - Response from QIA: There can be overlap between existing committees and new ones

Protection, regulations and enforcement

November Meeting

- Question regarding contaminants coming from rivers into Hudson Bay and James Bay – will federal government help protect the rivers and the contaminants in them?
 - Response from ECCC: It is hard to stop pollution coming from outside

- Response from QIA: Through Environmental Impact Assessments – could be negotiated into an Inuit Impact and Benefit Agreement.

April Meeting

- Question from the Government of Nunavut: Once IPCA is in place, could there be a provision where QIA could allow oil, gas or mining?
 - Response from QIA: Goal is conservation economy, diversifying economy through different means. Economic opportunities could come from conservation or development.
- Question from the Arctic Eider Society: Who would be financially responsible for legal fees if enforcement was needed for those in violation of protection regulations?
 - Good point, need discussion at table with federal government – have not talked about financial responsibility towards things such as oil spills. Difference between marine and terrestrial designation, and enforcement attached to both types.
 - Follow-up question from the Arctic Eider Society: If enforcement rules were adopted under QIA as a bylaw, would they have to be enforced by QIA?
 - QIA answer: Yes
 - *Updated Response: Federal regulations and jurisdictions would still apply.*
- Question on which tools can be used to protect, and how will responses to disasters such as oil spills be carried out in the context of a MPA? And how can marine life be guaranteed safe to eat in the case of pollution?
 - Response: Lots of work going on between DFO and Coast Guard for emergency response for oil spills, this was also brought up at Hudson Bay Consortium. Regarding food security and safety for consumption, we will seek more information on that.
- Question on how to protect against freshening of Hudson Bay water – it is much less salty than it used to be
 - Response from DFO: Lots of research being done on this – it is of concern to many and they are trying to monitor it.
 - Response from QIA: Monitoring and research from Nauttiqsuqtiit shows baseline data, an IPCA could create a governance structure that could intervene in projects within Nunavut waters.
- Question about hydro projects in Quebec and if this MPA would protect against projects in other jurisdictions
 - Response from DFO: This MPA would not be able to protect against things happening in other regions.
- Discussion on how ‘small and enclosed bays’ have been removed from the proposed MPA due to the devolution agreement between the Government of Canada and Government of Nunavut, with questions arising during conversations in the meetings, but the boundaries could be revisited as part of the planning for long-term protection.
 - Comments on how more clarity was needed in understanding what defined a ‘small and enclosed bay’, more simple language was requested
- Comment on how they should be able to amend protection during 5 years if the environment changes within the 5-year time period (such as sea ice, animal populations, erosion, etc).

Commercial fisheries

November Meeting

- Sanikiluaq community interest in commercial fisheries (e.g., benthic species) in Qikiqtait and beyond
- Question regarding commercial fisheries and economic opportunities in Marine and Terrestrial areas – can they occur?
 - Response: Currently there are no blanket prohibition of commercial fisheries in the proposed Qikiqtait MPA. As long as active licenses for future commercial fisheries activity are in place before 2025 designation of MPA by Ministerial Order (for up to 5 years) these would be considered on-going. IPCA's goal (for long-term) is to create balance between economic opportunities and protection.
 - **Update from response provided in November:** *if there are licenses and authorizations in place prior to designations, these will be listed as on-going activities.*
- Question regarding benthic species in Qikiqtait and if other jurisdictions would have commercial fisheries
 - Response: Not discussed as of yet, good question
- Question on how bottom contact fisheries could both exist and be in an MPA
 - Bottom contact fishing is a restricted activity so it would need to be considered ongoing when MPA by Ministerial Order is designated. (Note that bottom contact fishing can only be ongoing during the Ministerial Order period)
 - **Update from response provided in November:** *In long-term MPAs by Governor in Council regulations there are protection standards where bottom contact fishing is a restricted activity. In a Ministerial Order MPA (for up to five years) the protection standard does not apply but bottom contact fishing would need to be listed as an ongoing activity or in a class of ongoing activities. Further discussions will occur during the fall 2024 fisheries workshop in Sanikiluaq to discuss some of these questions. We will also ensure communications will continue on any developments in regards to fishing authorizations.*
- Question on stage of fisheries license – Feasibility Stage now, how to go to Stage 2?
 - If activity were inconsistent with Conservation Objective, would need to undergo risk assessment. Discussions needed between Fisheries Management and other partners to determine what kind of license would be applicable, how to go from exploratory to commercial phase, and long-term vision under IPCA.
 - **Update from response provided in November:** *DFO believes the appropriate regulation to authorize the licenses for both Stage 1 and 2 of the New and Emerging Fisheries Policy for the community of Sanikiluaq, is by using the Aboriginal Communal Fishing Licenses Regulations. As the license type will not change if movement between stages is necessary during the five-year period of a Ministerial Order MPA, the question around license types and whether they are the same ongoing activity will be remedied.*

April Meeting

- Question if researchers need letter of support from community when requesting Article 52 Research License?
 - Response: Yes a support letter is required, researchers are also supposed to report back on work, although it is not a requirement.
- Question regarding licenses issued recently – research licenses issued over last 5 years, science licenses issued for scallop and sea cucumber fisheries in 2023/2024. What is difference between research and science licenses, and can they continue under an MPA? And where are they in the stages of licensing?
 - Licenses have been issued for Sanikiluaq but only for science, community is not in an emerging fishery stage. Existing licenses could inform a fishery. Need to work together to ensure progress

- need scientific knowledge to support a fishery, and if you have enough, it is possible to go to Stage 2 and skip Stage 1. Need to have more conversations and get more answers on how.
- Question regarding concern about catch-and-release for fishing licenses and if it is prohibited; not in agreement with catch and release
 - Response: Not sure what each license and subsequent research require, but likely the bycatch is released unless it is sampled for some reason.
- Question regarding Qipaluk Inlet (skinny, long inlet excluded from MPA in maps as it is a small and enclosed bay) in reference to scallops and sea cucumber potential fishery; it wouldn't be in protected waters and that is a concern
 - Response: This can be discussed as part of the long-term vision of Qikiqtait.
- Comment from Elder on how they would like more Inuit traditional knowledge integrated into decision-making and harvesting regulations to provide a more complete picture of animal populations and ecosystem dynamics
 - Response: Wants to be part of a discussion on how to do that in a good way, that ensures ownership stays with community and that the shared information is used in context

Rights under Nunavut Agreement, legal and financial implications

November Meeting

- Discussions regarding protected rights secured under the Nunavut Agreement, including traditional harvesting rights
- Discussions regarding Inuit Impact and Benefits Agreement negotiations status
- Question if enforcement will be in place once MPA is designated
 - Response: Interesting topic to discuss regarding options available for enforcement, based on community desire and jurisdictional ability.

April Meeting

- Question on if traditional harvesting has bottom contact, will it be allowed?
 - Response: Yes, traditional harvesting will be allowed within the MPA
 - Follow-up question: Will traditional harvesting be defined? Indigenous people have been fighting for what is traditional harvesting vs what is not, but sometimes these definitions aren't clear
 - Follow-up response: Rights under the *Nunavut Agreement* will be protected according to their definition in the Agreement.

Sanikiluaq perspectives and priorities

November Meeting

- Question regarding special places and impacts to these places – what activities can continue in 5 years of protection?
 - Response: Any activities that are occurring from one year prior to designation will continue
- Discussion on work and priorities being advanced by the community of Sanikiluaq
- Discussions on connections with Cree and Nunavik communities, and the greater Hudson's Bay ecosystem

- Agreement from the Sanikiluaq Qikiqtait Steering Committee members that the boundary in the 2022 QIA Prospectus “A regional conservation approach” is consistent with the boundary the community would like to protect in Qikiqtait.
- Through discussions, comments and the survey responses community members indicated interest in the following infrastructure and support:
 - Multi-use facility
 - Small engine repair shop/public garage
 - Bridge, roads and cabins around community
 - Community freezer and processing plant with funding for operations
 - Two flights schedule to and from Iqaluit per week
 - Sewing centre
 - Support for SIKU

April Meeting

- Comment on how qualitative concepts such as money, data and measurements are difficult to align with Inuit cultural values on conservation, which is based more on feeling, experience, and spirituality. A balance between the two worldviews needs to be found moving forward.
- Comment on how DFO doesn’t understand Inuit values and has demonstrated through past and present actions that they are still unable to understand. There is not enough recognition placed on Inuit expertise and knowledge, there is too much control and regulation based on Southern values.
 - Response: Hoping for progress in the right direction, acknowledging that there is a long way to go, but steps are being taken in trying to employ more Northern locals in decision-making roles.
 - Follow-up question to previous comment: Will DFO be able to truly work with Inuit?
 - Response: Yes, it is a primary focus to work with Inuit, and working towards a fully functional region in the Arctic. Although we are currently working with Federal tools, the goal is to make them Inuit-led.
- A big picture question on ‘are things getting worse’ regarding freshening of Hudson Bay, want more clarity and communication from researchers on this
 - Response from Arctic Eider Society: Yes it is getting worse but not sure how much worse
- Interest in using the SIKU app to inform the MPA’s design and implementation

Terrestrial Protection through an Inuit Protected and Conserved Area

Terrestrial protection is a QIA led process with support from ECCC. During consultations there were presentations and discussions on the terrestrial process. However this report is focusing on the marine process through DFO under the *Oceans Act*.

November Meeting

- Committee members’ showed strong support for terrestrial protection as an Inuit Protected and Conserved Area (IPCA)-
- Question if Sanikiluarmit have to cede more rights in order to establish an IPCA?
 - Response from QIA: QIA has only expressed interest in an IPCA. There will be no ceding of right by Inuit in order to establish an IPCA.

April Meeting

- Question on if soapstone mining and gravel quarries will continue to be allowed?
 - Response from QIA: Soapstone mining is protected under the Nunavut Agreement, so yes. Gravel quarries, if ongoing, yes, but roads to access mines would need to be taken into account – would need to be discussed with management committee – but don't want to limit anybody in Sanikiluaq.
- Interest in transferring certain portions of Crown Land to municipal ownership, so access roads may be created by the Hamlet of Sanikiluaq
- Interest in diverting some rivers that no longer flow so they may flow again – community can do it, they have the means – they just need permission. Do they have the permission?
 - Response: If this happens on Inuit-owned land, it's a conversation between Inuit and QIA, but if the river is fish-bearing, other departments (such as DFO) would have to get involved. Recognize that this has discussion been ongoing for a while and follow-up answers are needed for permissions.

Other Points of Discussion

There were several questions and topics that were outside the scope of the protected areas conversations, and topics that will require additional conversations.

Topics that can be discussed during long-term planning for the area include:

- An area called Qipaluk Inlet (a long, skinny inlet), the 'small and enclosed bays' adjustment to the MPA now excludes this area from protection. Community members stated that as a concern and are wondering what the implications would be for sea cucumber populations there – potential fishery could be there but if it is in an unprotected area that is concerning.
- A follow-up discussion on how to include local and traditional knowledge into the regulations in a culturally appropriate way was requested.

Topics that were outside the scope of a Marine Protected Area:

- Further information was requested on how marine life in the region can be guaranteed to be safe for consumption, even with existing and potential pollutants.
- Regarding how some rivers no longer flow to the ocean, and how Sanikiluaq community members are requesting to take matters into their own hands to increase river flow (by dredging, for example), it was recognized this has been a question from the community for a while and the Government of Canada needed to provide more information on the permissions, especially if rivers are fish-bearing.
- More clarity from researchers was requested on the status of the freshening of Hudson Bay and how much worse it may be getting.

Next Steps

The next steps to pursue establishment of a new Ministerial Order MPA will be to seek stakeholder input on the proposal, seek formal community support, complete assessments and approvals needed under the Nunavut Agreement such as conformity determination by the Nunavut Planning Commission and Nunavut Wildlife Management Board approval, and complete DFO's regulatory process. Formal letters of support will be sought from community hamlets and Hunter and Trapper Associations. Community members are encouraged to communicate their feedback on the proposal to these organizations to inform their decision. DFO will notify communities and stakeholders prior to the proposal being published online in the Canada Gazette for a 30-day public comment period, additional input can be provided at that time as well.

It is important to us that we have summarized your input on this report correctly. If you feel that we have missed any input provided during our meetings or captured information incorrectly, please reach out to DFO.ArcticMPC-ArctiquePCM.MPO@dfo-mpo.gc.ca for any required corrections.

The Qikiqtait and Sarvarjuaq Working Group would like to thank all of the community members who attended these meetings - your feedback is vital and appreciated.

Thank you!

Appendix 1. Regulatory Intent for the Proposed Qikiqtait MPA

Regulatory Intent for the Proposed Qikiqtait Marine Protected Area by Ministerial Order

I. Background and Significance

The Belcher Islands Ecologically and Biologically Significant Area (EBSA) was identified in 2011 as part of a larger evaluation conducted by DFO to identify EBSAs throughout Canada's Arctic (DFO 2011). In 2019, Sanikiluaq considered developing Qikiqtait as a blend of Marine Protected Areas (MPA) and National Wildlife Areas (NWA) to protect both the marine and terrestrial areas. In February 2023, Qikiqtait was identified as a marine area under consideration for conservation by the Government of Canada.

Ecological Significance

Qikiqtait and the Belcher Islands are a distinctive geographic and oceanographic region in southeast of Hudson Bay. The archipelago covers a total area of approximately 13,000 square kilometers. The Belcher Islands have recurring, biologically important polynyas. The area is ecologically significant due to several factors:

- **Biodiversity:** High benthic diversity, including sea urchins, sea cucumbers, and bivalves are found in this area. Many higher trophic level species (e.g., Beluga, Walrus, Common Eider, Polar Bear, Seals) found within this area. Local marine life also includes. Lemmings, foxes and Arctic hare are found on land. The coast near Sanikiluaq is also home to Arctic char, capelin, cod, lumpfish, scallops, sea urchin, sea cucumber and sculpin (Gilchrist and Robertson, 2000).
- **Primary Production:** Qikiqtait plays a critical role in ecosystem function whereby strong vertical mixing as a result of cold summer sea-surface temperatures sustains high primary productivity (Galbraith and Larouche, 2011).
- **Migration and Breeding Grounds:** The Belcher Islands act as an winter habitat for beluga and walrus, important feeding grounds for polar bear, and support large populations of eider ducks. As well, the area supports high benthic diversity (DFO, 2011).
- **Climate Regulation:** The multiple reoccurring polynyas throughout Qikiqtait influence the exchange of heat, gases, and freshwater between the ocean and atmosphere, thereby playing a role in local and regional climate dynamics. It helps regulate the formation of sea ice and influences ocean circulation patterns (DFO, 2011).
- **Traditional Knowledge:** The people of Sanikiluaq call themselves Sanikiluarmit, meaning "people of the islands" (Qikiqtani Inuit Association, 2014). The earliest human habitation of the Belcher Islands dates to 700-500 BC (Maxell 1985). Subsistence harvesting for sea cucumber, scallops and sea urchin is done by community members in shallow waters close to communities, through the use of pull nets. Residents from Sanikiluaq also harvest beluga whale and walrus (WWF, 2021). Sanikiluarmit collect grasses along the shoreline and use the plant to make baskets (Lawrence, 2018).

Overall, the Qikiqtait area serves as a unique and vital ecosystem, supporting diverse marine life and is culturally important to Sanikiluaq.

Proposed Approach

Establishment of a Ministerial Order Marine Protected Area (MPA) under the *Oceans Act* has been proposed for Qikiqtait as an interim protection measure and a first step to establish long-term marine protection in Qikiqtait. While interim protection is in place, the Government of Canada will explore the options for a long-term conservation measures in the area with the Qikiqtani Inuit Association (QIA) and the Government of Nunavut, through analysis and further consultation. The consideration of long-term conservation measures will include an Inuit Protected and Conserved Area (IPCA).

The Ministerial Order MPA will allow the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard to freeze the footprint of ongoing activities in the area for up to five years. This will mean that no new activities will be allowed in the area following designation. Any activities that have occurred, or were authorized to occur, in the proposed Qikiqtait MPA during the 12 months prior to designation would be considered ongoing activities and would be allowed to continue in the proposed MPA.

II. Proposed Objectives for Qikiqtait

Conservation objectives are broad statements that describe what species or features in the protected area should be conserved. For an MPA under the *Oceans Act* conservation objectives need to refer to protecting or conserving marine species, unique habitats, high biodiversity, and/or the ecosystem. These objectives guide the interim nature of this work and long-term objectives will be developed, in the future.

The following objectives have been proposed for Qikiqtait. The second statement reflects our commitments to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act Action Plan and the recommendations from the Qikiqtani Truth Commission.

- (1) To support the conservation, protection, and understanding of the marine environment around the Belcher Islands, including the wildlife and other species, that is of immense value to Inuit and Inuit culture.
- (2) To support Inuit leadership in the conservation of Qikiqtait to ensure the continuity of Inuit culture, values, and practices, including accumulating and passing down Inuit knowledge as well as Inuit stewardship and governance.

III. Map and Boundaries

The proposed boundaries for Qikiqtait were put forward by QIA. These boundaries are shown in Figure 1. If established, the boundaries will follow the Nunavut Settlement Area surrounding the Belcher Islands excluding the north-eastern portion where the Nunavik Settlement Area overlaps. The boundaries exclude Small Enclosed Bays as described in Chapter 1, Definitions and Interpretation of the Nunavut Lands and Resources Devolution Agreement signed January 18, 2024 between the Government of Canada and the Government of Nunavut and Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated.

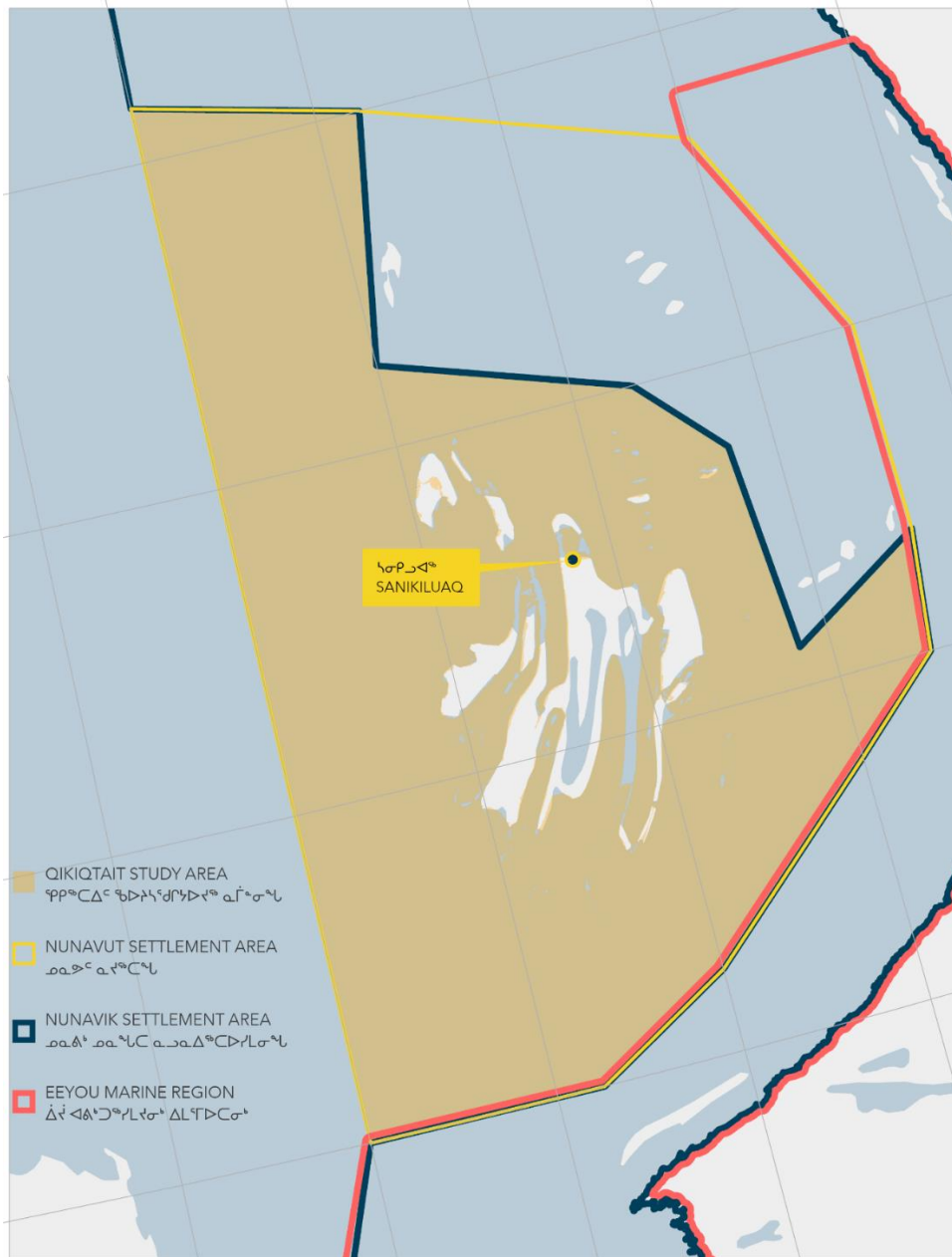


Figure 1. A map showing the boundaries of the proposed Qikiqtait MPA.

IV. Prohibitions and Allowed Activities

It is prohibited in the MPA to carry out any activity that disturbs, damages, destroys or removes from the MPA any unique geological or archeological features or any living marine organism or any part of its habitat, or is likely to do so.

However some activities would be allowed to occur. Activities listed below would be able to occur if Qikiqtait were to become an MPA by Ministerial Order:

- All rights provided for under the *Nunavut Agreement* are respected within the boundary of the Nunavut Settlement Area
- All ongoing activities (see list below) taking place one year prior to designation or activities that have otherwise been authorized to occur by applicable federal laws or by laws of a province/territory
- Research activities consistent with the conservation objectives of the MPA
- Safety, security and emergency activities

Under the *Oceans Act*, DFO would implement an MPA by Ministerial Order by prohibiting any other activities from occurring during the period of the Order, up to five years.

V. List of Ongoing Activities

Ongoing activities can continue to occur if Qikiqtait becomes an MPA by Ministerial Order under the *Oceans Act*. The definition of an ongoing activity is any activity that has taken place one year prior to designation, or activities that have otherwise been authorized to occur by applicable federal laws or by laws of a province/territory.

Activities occurring within the proposed Qikiqtait MPA boundaries have been categorized into classes of ongoing activities which will be allowed in the MPA:

- Hunting and trapping activities
- Fishing activities
- Harvesting of marine plants
- Marine navigation activities
- National defence activities carried out by the Department of National Defence
- Canadian Coast Guard activities carried out by the Canadian Coast Guard
- Tourism activities
- Recreational activities
- Educational activities
- Travel over sea ice using motorized vehicles and non-motorized methods
- Traditional Knowledge and cultural research activities
- Scientific research activities
- Filming activities
- Activities provided for and carried out in a manner not inconsistent with the Nunavut Agreement

Please let us know if you are aware of another ongoing activity that is not captured in the list above.

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- DFO. 2011. Identification of Ecologically and Biologically Significant Areas (EBSA) in the Canadian Arctic. DFO Can. Sci. Advis. Sec. Sci. Advis. Rep. 2011/055. Available from <https://waves-vagues.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/library-bibliotheque/344747.pdf>
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Appendix 2. Documented Activities Occurring in the Proposed Qikiqtait MPA

Activities We Heard From Communities and Stakeholders in the Proposed Qikiqtait MPA

Ongoing activities can continue to occur if Qikiqtait becomes an MPA by Ministerial Order under the *Oceans Act*. The definition of an ongoing activity is any activity that has taken place one year prior to designation, or activities that have otherwise been authorized to occur by applicable federal laws or by laws of a province/territory.

Activities documented as occurring within the proposed Qikiqtait MPA boundaries have been categorized and are listed below with some examples. These were informed through community consultations and stakeholder and industry engagement.

Hunting and Trapping Activities

- Hunting occurs for subsistence, traditional, and commercial use of marine mammals and bird species. Hunting also occurs by non-Inuit who live near Qikiqtait. Some examples of hunting includes:
 - Eider ducks are harvested for a food resource and the skin and feathers are used as material for clothing;
 - Beluga whales are hunted around the Lukisee Islands in the spring;
 - Seals are hunted in a bay near Flaherty Island;
 - A wide array of birds are hunted, with two known hunting spots being the Sleeper Islands and the large bay in Middle Island.
- Hunting also occurs for tourism, recreation and sport hunting. This includes guided expeditions of non-Inuit hunters.
- Hunting is also a part of research, monitoring and stewardship programs. Examples include:
 - Arctic Eider Society offers honoraria to hunters to document details of their harvest on SIKU
 - The Nauttiqsuqtiit program shares their harvests with Elders and the community to help Inuit access country food.

Fishing Activities

- Fishing occurs for subsistence, traditional and commercial use for fish and invertebrate species. It also occurs by non-Inuit who live near Qikiqtait.
- Fishing occurs for tourism and recreational use as well as sport fishing or guided expeditions of non-Inuit fishers.
- Fishing is done for scientific research which includes:
 - research to determine commercial fisheries potential.
- The Sanikiluaq Hunters and Trappers Association is currently undertaking the application process for a Stage I Feasibility license under the New and Emerging Fisheries Policy, aimed at pursuing a commercial fishery in the Belcher Islands area.

Marine Plant Harvesting

- Harvesting occurs for marine plant species for commercial purposes, traditional and subsistence use. An example includes:
 - Sea grass basket making.

Marine Navigation Activities

- There is local vessel traffic for subsistence, traditional and/or community use, this includes:
 - Boats and small motorized vessels;
 - Canoeing/qajaq or other non-motorized vessels.
- There is vessel traffic and associated activities for tourism and recreational use such as:
 - Outfitting;
 - Guided or self-guided sight-seeing expeditions;
 - Wildlife viewing;
- There is vessel traffic for commercial use such as:
 - Sealift/goods transportation.
- There is vessel traffic for research or monitoring, including but not limited to vessels such as:
 - CCGS Amundsen;
 - RV William Kennedy;
 - RV Ludy Pudluk.
- There is also vessel traffic for National Defense, and Canadian Coast Guard activities.

Safety, Security, and Emergency Activities

- Safety, security, and emergency activities occur in the area for public safety, national defense, national security, or law enforcement. This includes but is not limited to:
 - Emergency search and rescue;
 - Response to shipping or aircraft accidents;
 - National security requirements;
 - Activities carried out by the Department of National Defence;
 - Activities carried out by the Canadian Coast Guard.

Travel Over Sea Ice

- Inuit and non-Inuit use the sea ice as a method of travel in the proposed Qikiqtait MPA, this includes:
 - Travel routes for hunting by snowmobile and motorized vehicles, including snowmobiles towing boats to floe edges to facilitate the hunts;
 - Non-motorized methods of travel such as dog-sledding, walking, snowshoeing, skiing etc.;
 - Travel routes to visit nearby communities/Islands such as Baker Dozens Islands, Salikuit Islands, Camsell Island, Kugong Island, Sleeper Islands etc.

Tourism and Recreational Activities

- Inuit and non-Inuit use the area for tourism and recreational activities, examples include:
 - Arts and culture;
 - Wildlife viewing;
 - Birdwatching;
 - Eco-tourism;
 - Dog-sledding;
 - Sport hunting;

- Sport fishing;
- Camping on sea ice or traveling to camp sites or cabins;
- Other outfitting or guided excursions.

Educational Activities

- Educational activities occur in the marine environment and over sea ice, such as outreach programs or experience based learning programs.

Research and Monitoring Activities

- Research and monitoring programs occur in the Qikiqtait area, both in the marine and environment form research vessels or smaller vessels as well as sea ice based research programs. Types of research includes:
 - Community-led monitoring programs such as those supported by the Arctic Eider Society;
 - Academic research projects and programs supported by universities, colleges, etc.
 - Surveys to inform fiber optic cables;
- Traditional knowledge research
 - Community-led monitoring programs for the entire Belcher Islands.

Filming Activities

- Other activities documented to have occurred within the Qikiqtait area include filming and media content development. Examples include:
 - Documentary film making;
 - Google street view filming near Sanikiluaq and over sea ice travel routes;
 - Social media or social networking filming.