

Consultation and Engagement Summary

History of partnerships

Qikiqtait has been put forward by the community of Sanikiluaq and the Qikiqtani Inuit Association (QIA) as an important area to protect due to its importance to Inuit in providing key habitat for ecologically and culturally significant species. For decades, Sanikiluarmit have been actively involved in research and monitoring, while also sharing Inuit Qaujimaqatuqangit and local perspectives to educate on the importance of the region, concerns for its future, and the need to protect it (<https://qikiqtait.ca/>). QIA has also highlighted the importance of protecting the Qikiqtait region in their Prospectus on a Regional Conservation Approach.

Since 2019, the Government of Canada and QIA have been working together to identify options for the conservation and protection of Qikiqtait and other sites within the Qikiqtani Region of Nunavut. In November 2021 a Qikiqtait and Sarvarjuaq Working Group (the Working Group) was created to advance the conservation and protection of the proposed Qikiqtait and Sarvarjuaq Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). 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 supported the required processes to create the potential MPAs by Ministerial Order. Members of the working group have also consulted with the community of Sanikiluaq to ensure their support for the proposed Qikiqtait MPA.

Consultation and Engagement activities

In 2019, the community-led Sanikiluaq Qikiqtait Steering Committee (SQSC), comprised of representation from the Sanikiluaq Hunters and Trappers (HTA), the Sanikiluaq Hamlet Council and the Arctic Eider Society, was formed to advance Inuit environmental stewardship in and around Sanikiluaq. There are 18 members in the SQSC and it includes the chair of the Sanikiluaq HTA, the Mayor of Sanikiluaq, and the Executive Director of the Arctic Eider Society. The SQSC is the primary point of contact in Sanikiluaq on conservation matters. The SQSC met with QIA to assert their position that conservation in Qikiqtait must remain a community-driven process while expressing their support for the Government of Canada's proposed approach to protecting the area. QIA supported the SQSC's vision and worked with the community to secure funding via the Canada Nature Fund while IIBA negotiations were underway.

Virtual meetings between the SQSC, QIA and the Government of Canada (represented by DFO and ECCC) began in July 2020 to support resource inventory activities in Qikiqtait. In 2021 and 2022, the SQSC further advanced its community-driven efforts to implement their conservation programs, including a wide variety of sea ice, oceanographic and wildlife monitoring programs.

Representatives of the Qikiqtait and Sarvarjuaq Working Group with members from QIA, DFO, ECCC and the Government of Nunavut, conducted two rounds of in person consultations. The first round of consultations occurred in Sanikiluaq, Nunavut between November 7 - 8 2023. 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 objectives of the proposed Qikiqtait MPA by Ministerial Order. The second round of consultations took place from April 16 - 18 2024. During the April 2024 consultations, surveys were also handed out, with 16 respondents in total. The second survey consisted of 11 questions about local use of the Qikiqtait area. The purpose of the

second survey was to document the current and ongoing local activities being undertaken within the proposed boundaries of the MPA. The survey questions from the two rounds of consultations and a summary of the responses are included in the What We Heard Report.

On November 7, 2023, the 18 members of the SQSC hosted the 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 again met with the SQSC 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, 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. 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 SQSC, 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.

There was discussion by community members about the approach for protecting the marine environment, with some indicating their support for the proposed Marine Protected Area by Ministerial Order. Discussions centered around local infrastructure interests, concerns about the health of rivers that flow into Qikiqtait, the importance of emergency response and prioritizing working together with adjacent Nunavik and Cree community members. In general, there was a lot of support indicated for protecting Qikiqtait, and many requests for communities to be involved in the long-term management of the area. DFO informed community members that after the second round of consultations were complete, they would receive a report summarizing the feedback received during consultations as well as a request for a letter to formally support the establishment of Qikiqtait as a Marine Protected Area by Ministerial Order.

In September 2024, DFO distributed a "What We Heard Report" to the Sanikiluaq Hunters and Trappers, the Arctic Eider Society and the Sanikiluaq Hamlet in English and Sanikiluaq Inuktitut dialect. This report included meeting summaries for all meetings held in both rounds of consultations, feedback received from the community and responses to questions that came up during the meetings. The report also included results of the survey distribution and informed recipients that DFO would be seeking Support Letters as a next step in the process toward establishment.

Table 1. List of community organizations consulted in November 2023 and April 2024 and estimated number of individuals. All meetings were in person and individuals represent adult participants. The Sanikiluaq Qikiqtait Steering Committee has representation from the Hunters and Trappers, the Hamlet, the Mayor, Arctic Eider Society and other community members.

Community Group	Date of Consultation	Estimated Number of Individuals
Sanikiluaq Qikiqtait Steering Committee	November 7 & 8 2023	18
	April 2024	18
Sanikiluaq Public	November 2023	96
	April 2024	54

Other Stakeholders

In July 2024, letters were sent to industry and other stakeholders introducing Qikiqtait and proposing marine protection in the region using a Ministerial Order MPA (see supporting document Qikiqtait Letters to Industry and Stakeholders). DFO requested information about ongoing activities in the region and invited stakeholders to comment on the proposal for a Ministerial Order MPA in Qikiqtait. Stakeholder groups included territorial stakeholders, environmental non-government organizations (ENGOS), fishing industry, shipping industry, cruise ship industry, oil and gas and mining industries, tour operators, and academia. In October 2024 a second round of letters were sent to stakeholders and industry to share proposed regulations for the Qikiqtait Study Area and to seek any comments or feedback.

Stakeholders in Nunavut were engaged through letters distributed by emails. Stakeholders were identified with assistance from the Government of Nunavut and the Qikiqtani Inuit Association. The stakeholders engaged in this process included the following: Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, Nunavut Wildlife Management Board (NWMB), Nunavut Water Board, Qikiqtaaluk Wildlife Board, WWF-Canada, Oceans North, Ecology Action Centre, Arctic Eider Society, Canadian Wildlife Federation, Nunavut Fisheries Association, relevant stakeholders within the Eastern Arctic Groundfish Stakeholder Advisory Committee, Northern Shrimp Advisory Committee, Prairies and Northern Region-Canadian Marine Advisory Council, Nunavut Eastern Arctic Shipping Inc., Shipping Federation of Canada, Woodward Group of Companies, Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators, Northwest Territories and Nunavut Chamber of Mines, Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, Travel Nunavut, Keewaytinook Okimakanak, ArcticNet, Nunavut Research Institute, Amundsen Science, RV William Kennedy, Memorial University, Hudson Bay Consortium, Arctic Security Consultants, Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC), Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK), Mushkegowuk Council, Cree Nation Government, Grand Council of the Cree, Eeyou Marine Region Wildlife Board, Eeyou Marine Region Impact Review Board, Eeyou Marine Region Planning Commission, Makkivik Corporation, Kativik Regional Government, Regional Nunavimmi Uumajulirijit Katutjiqatigiinninga, Nunavik Marine Region Wildlife Board, Nunavik Marine Region Impact Review Board, and Nunavik Marine Region Planning Commission.

DFO presented to the Qikiqtaaluk Wildlife Board (QWB) on the proposal on November 27, 2024, providing information on the community support letters received and notifying the Board that DFO

would be seeking their endorsement. DFO will continue to engage the QWB on this site.

At the request of the Government of Nunavut, Fisheries and Oceans Canada sought information from Kuhkenah (KNET), a company interested in surveying areas within the proposed Qikiqtait boundaries toward the possibility of laying fiber optic cable. KNET informed Fisheries and Oceans Canada that at present, their plans did not include Sanikiluaq in the fiber optic connectivity. After discussions with Fisheries and Oceans Canada, KNET advised that their planned activities would not fall within the proposed Qikiqtait boundaries.

Makkivik's Department of Environment, Wildlife and Research reached out to Fisheries and Oceans Canada requesting additional information about the proposed Qikiqtait MPA. In September 2024 Fisheries and Oceans Canada conducted a presentation including information about the regulatory intent. In addition, DFO provided more detailed information about the proposed Ministerial Order MPA as well as what activities would be allowed. There was no follow-up information requested.

Summary of questions, issues and concerns expressed by public

Community interest in protecting Qikiqtait is based largely on the area's ecological importance and significance to Inuit (past, present and future). For decades, local knowledge and Inuit Qaujimajatuqangiit have been shared to highlight the importance of this region, and to inform conservation measures that could address concerns relating to a changing environment. The Sanikiluaq Hunters and Trappers and the Hamlet Council were in favour of the Ministerial Order MPA, and indicated the importance of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, community input and decision-making in future decisions associated with long-term protection. There was an emphasis from the community of Sanikiluaq to remain at the forefront of conservation management and prioritize local leadership. The supporting "*What We Heard Report*" provides additional information on community interests, concerns and questions.

Key take-aways from community consultations include:

Sanikiluaq Qikiqtait Steering Committee: There has been a long history of environmental conservation work led by the community of Sanikiluaq and there is a desire to remain active and included in management decisions regarding marine protection in Qikiqtait. There is a strong desire for marine protection with the ability to explore inshore fisheries development.

The public of Sanikiluaq: Meeting participants communicated support to protect Qikiqtait, they voiced their desire for employment opportunities arising from the development of the proposed Qikiqtait MPA. They also wanted to have updates about the progress with accessible language.

Letters of Support Received: Following in-person consultations, letters in support of the proposal were received from the Sanikiluaq Hunter and Trappers Association, the Arctic Eider Society and the Sanikiluaq Hamlet Council. The Government of Nunavut also provided a letter in support of the proposed Qikiqtait Ministerial Order MPA. Please refer to the supporting documents for all letters of support.

Next Steps

If the proposed Qikiqtait Marine Protected Area is established by a Ministerial Order under the *Oceans Act*, communities will be consulted and meaningfully engaged as the Government of Canada and its partners continue to work toward long-term options for Qikiqtait, which includes the consideration of an Inuit Protected and Conserved Area.