

DETAILS

Non-technical project proposal description

English: Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO), along with the Qikiqtani Inuit Association (QIA) are proposing a short-term marine protection measure in the Qikiqtait Study Area as a first step towards establishing long-term protection. The protection measure being proposed is a Marine Protected Area (MPA) by Ministerial Order (or "Order") under the Oceans Act, s35.1(2), which would freeze the footprint of ongoing activities in the Qikiqtait Study Area for a period of up to five years. While the Order is in place, the Government of Canada will work collaboratively with Inuit and northern partners to consider long term protection priorities, including supporting an Inuit Protected and Conserved Area (IPCA). This proposal was developed in collaboration with Inuit and northern partners and aligns with the conservation priorities of the Government of Canada and QIA, as outlined in their 2022 Prospectus, which focuses on a regional approach to conservation in the Qikiqtani Region. This proposal for a Ministerial Order MPA in Qikiqtait requires the negotiation of an Inuit Impact and Benefit Agreement (IIBA) within the Nunavut Settlement Area. An IIBA between the Government of Canada and QIA is currently being negotiated and will be completed prior to establishment in 2025. The Qikiqtait Study Area is located within the Belcher Islands Ecologically and Biologically Significant Area (DFO, 2011) in southeast Hudson Bay. The community of Sanikiluaq, which is adjacent to the proposed MPA, has long recognized the importance of this area, and has advocated for Inuit stewardship and Inuit-led governance for many years (<https://qikiqtait.ca/vision/>). The Qikiqtait Study Area was also identified in the Qikiqtani Inuit Association's (QIA) 2022 Prospectus on regional conservation as contributing to a network of protected areas planned across the Qikiqtani Region. Ecologically significant features of the area include: unique recurring polynyas and upwellings, nutrient-rich waters from nearby river plumes and estuaries, a productive benthic invertebrate community, and the presence of importance species such as Common Eider, Arctic Char, and a wide range of marine mammals. Under the Order, any activity that has occurred in the Qikiqtait Study Area over the 12 months prior to designation, or that is authorized to occur, would be allowed to continue and new activities would be prohibited, with some exceptions. Activities that would be permitted in the Qikiqtait MPA by Ministerial Order include: hunting and trapping, fishing, harvesting of marine plants, marine navigation, activities carried out by the department of National Defense and Canadian Coast Guard, tourism, recreational and educational activities, travel over sea ice (motorized and non-motorized methods of travel), Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit and community-based research activities, scientific research and filming. The Order would not apply with respect to the rights of Inuit as provided for in either the Nunavut Agreement or the Nunavik Agreement. In 2023/24, the Qikiqtait and Sarvarjuaq Working Group identified a preliminary list of activities occurring in the Qikiqtait Study Area, including annual sealift operations, icebreaking activities, marine research vessel activity, subsistence and traditional wildlife harvesting, recreational activities, and tourism. Additional activities were informed through community consultations and stakeholder engagement, including the harvesting of Eider Duck down, harvesting of marine plants, as well as media and filming activities. There is currently no oil and gas development in the area, nor mining operations. Partner input, community consultations, and industry and stakeholder engagement informed the list of ongoing activities in this area. In-person consultations with the community of Sanikiluaq regarding the proposed Qikiqtait MPA took place in November 2023 and in April 2024, facilitated by two important groups; the Sanikiluaq Qikiqtait Steering Committee (SQSC) formed by community members in 2018 to advance protection of the proposed Qikiqtait MPA, and the Qikiqtait and Sarvarjuaq Working Group, established in September 2021 to advance conservation measures in the Qikiqtait and Sarvarjuaq study areas. The Working Group includes members from QIA, the Government of Nunavut, and the Government of Canada. These two rounds of consultations consisted of daytime meetings between the Hamlet Council, Hunters and Trappers Association, the SQSC and the Working Group, along with an open public meeting taking place in the evening. Discussions focused on developing conservation objectives for the proposed MPA, determining the ongoing activities in the area, inclusion of Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit in future management and monitoring and community concerns and priorities regarding emerging commercial fisheries around Sanikiluaq. In September 2024, the Working Group sought community input on a "What We Heard" report summarizing the feedback provided by Sanikiluaq community members during these consultation processes. In October 2024, letters in support of the proposed regulation were received from the Sanikiluaq Hamlet Council, the Hunters and Trappers Association and the Arctic Eider Society. In addition, a letter of support has been received from the Government of

Activities

Location	Activity Type	Land Status	Site history	Site archaeological or paleontological value	Proximity to the nearest communities and any protected areas
Qikiqtait MPA Boundary	Other	Marine	The proposed Qikiqtait Marine Protected Area (MPA) is important for many Arctic marine species. It has unique physical features such as recurring polynyas, and is of critical importance to Inuit. The proposed MPA would be established in the marine environment only, starting at the low water mark.	Inuit have occupied this area for generations; there are important harvesting areas, culturally significant and historical sites, and travel routes.	Sanikiluaq is the nearest community to the proposed Qikiqtait Marine Protected Area. The Sanikiluaq Hunters and Trappers Association and the Sanikiluaq Hamlet Council have both provided a letter of support for the establishment of the proposed Qikiqtait MPA.

Community Involvement & Regional Benefits

Community	Name	Organization	Date Contacted
Sanikiluaq	Organization representatives	Sanikiluaq Qikiqtait Steering Committee	2023-11-07
Sanikiluaq	Organization representatives	Sanikiluaq Qikiqtait Steering Committee	2023-11-08
Sanikiluaq	Organization representatives	Sanikiluaq Hamlet Council	2023-11-07
Sanikiluaq	Organization representatives	Sanikiluaq Hamlet Council	2023-11-08
Sanikiluaq	Organization representatives	Sanikiluaq Hunters and Trappers Association	2021-11-07
Sanikiluaq	Organization representatives	Sanikiluaq Hunters and Trappers Association	2023-11-08
Sanikiluaq	Organization representatives	Arctic Eider Society	2023-11-07
Sanikiluaq	Organization representatives	Arctic Eider Society	2023-11-08
Sanikiluaq	Community members	Sanikiluaq Community	2023-11-08
Sanikiluaq	Organization representatives	Sanikiluaq Qikiqtait Steering Committee	2024-04-16
Sanikiluaq	Organization representatives	Sanikiluaq Qikiqtait Steering Committee	2024-04-17
Sanikiluaq	Organization representatives	Sanikiluaq Qikiqtait Steering Committee	2024-04-18

Sanikiluaq	Organization representatives	Sanikiluaq Hamlet Council	2024-04-16
Sanikiluaq	Organization representatives	Sanikiluaq Hamlet Council	2024-04-17
Sanikiluaq	Organization Representatives	Sanikiluaq Hamlet Council	2024-04-18
Sanikiluaq	Organization Representatives	Sanikiluaq Hunters and Trappers Association	2024-04-16
Sanikiluaq	Organization representatives	Sanikiluaq Hunters and Trappers Association	2024-04-17
Sanikiluaq	Organization representatives	Sanikiluaq Hunters and Trappers Association	2024-04-18
Sanikiluaq	Community members	Sanikiluaq Community	2024-04-17
Sanikiluaq	Organization representatives	Arctic Eider Society	2024-04-16
Sanikiluaq	Organization representatives	Arctic Eider Society	2024-04-17
Sanikiluaq	Organization representatives	Arctic Eider Society	2024-04-18

Authorizations

Indicate the areas in which the project is located:

Authorizations

Regulatory Authority	Authorization Description	Current Status	Date Issued / Applied	Expiry Date
Fisheries and Oceans Canada	A Marine Protected Area by Ministerial Order would be established under the Oceans Act. Marine activities would continue to be regulated under the applicable provisions of the Fisheries Act, the Species at Risk Act, the Canada Shipping Act, 2001, and other federal legislation.	Applied, Decision Pending		

Project transportation types

Transportation Type	Proposed Use	Length of Use
Water	N/A	

Project accomodation types

Other,

Material Use

Equipment to be used (including drills, pumps, aircraft, vehicles, etc)

Equipment Type	Quantity	Size - Dimensions	Proposed Use
Information is not available			

Detail Fuel and Hazardous Material Use

Detail fuel material use:	Fuel Type	Number of containers	Container Capacity	Total Amount	Units	Proposed Use
Information is not available						

Water Consumption

Daily amount (m3)	Proposed water retrieval methods	Proposed water retrieval location
0		

Waste

Waste Management

Project Activity	Type of Waste	Projected Amount Generated	Method of Disposal	Additional treatment procedures
Information is not available				

Environmental Impacts:

There are no negative environmental impacts anticipated as part of this proposed regulation. The proposed Qikiqtait Marine Protected Area (MPA) would prevent new activities in the area that may pose an ecological risk to its species and habitats. As such, no mitigation measures are required as a direct result of the proposal, rather the proposal is expected to have a positive impact to the environment.

Additional Information

SECTION A1: Project Info

SECTION A2: Allweather Road

SECTION A3: Winter Road

SECTION B1: Project Info

SECTION B2: Exploration Activity

SECTION B3: Geosciences

SECTION B4: Drilling

SECTION B5: Stripping

SECTION B6: Underground Activity

SECTION B7: Waste Rock

SECTION B8: Stockpiles

SECTION B9: Mine Development

SECTION B10: Geology

SECTION B11: Mine

SECTION B12: Mill

SECTION C1: Pits

SECTION D1: Facility

SECTION D2: Facility Construction

SECTION D3: Facility Operation

SECTION D4: Vessel Use

SECTION E1: Offshore Survey

SECTION E2: Nearshore Survey

SECTION E3: Vessel Use

SECTION F1: Site Cleanup

SECTION G1: Well Authorization

SECTION G2: Onland Exploration

SECTION G3: Offshore Exploration

SECTION G4: Rig

SECTION H1: Vessel Use

SECTION H2: Disposal At Sea

SECTION I1: Municipal Development

Description of Existing Environment: Physical Environment

Summary from attached document: Biophysical and Ecological Overview Summary of the Qikiqtait Study Area and Adjacent Waters (see pages 3-20 for more detail). The proposed Qikiqtait Marine Protected Area (MPA) represents a portion of the Canadian Arctic that contains critical year-round and seasonally important habitat for a variety of aquatic species. Encompassing the Belcher Islands Archipelago, Qikiqtait is a unique, important environment and is comprised of valuable ecosystem components that includes strong upwelling and a recurrent biologically important polynya system in the winter and large river plumes and estuaries. Some of the coldest summer sea-surface temperatures in southern Hudson Bay (south of Southampton Island) are in the Belcher Islands region. These cold summer sea temperatures suggest strong vertical mixing that increases nutrient availability in the summer months, resulting in improved primary productivity within the marine system. The Great Whale River, Boutin River, Nastapoka and La Grande River drain west towards the proposed Qikiqtait MPA from the coast of Quebec and James Bay. Extensive nutrient-rich plumes form at the mouth of the Great Whale River and La Grande River that extend far offshore fuel primary productivity in the marine environment. The Qikiqtait Study Area has unique physical features such as annual reoccurring polynyas (areas of open water surrounded by sea ice) which are a result of various combinations of currents, tides, upwelling and winds. Polynyas permit ice edge ecosystems to develop based on intense primary production by algae within the ice itself and of phytoplankton (microscopic marine plants) due to the greater availability of light coming from the adjacent open waters. There have been at least eight polynyas identified in the proposed Qikiqtait MPA. The polynyas around the Belcher Islands support a wide range of marine life. The community of Sanikiluaq uses these polynyas to hunt seabirds and seals during the winter months, and is an important contribution to food security in the community. Arctic temperatures are rising faster than the global average, with significant negative effects to sea ice. The Arctic marine environment surrounding the Belcher Islands is changing and the length of the open water season is greatly increasing.

Description of Existing Environment: Biological Environment

Summary from attached document: Biophysical and Ecological Overview Summary of the Qikiqtait Study Area and Adjacent Waters (see pages 32-75 for more detail). This area is a significantly productive area in the circumpolar Arctic. The abundant productivity has far-reaching consequences for the community of Sanikiluaq and other communities around Hudson Bay. The upwelling of nutrients and recurring polynyas attract large aggregations of a broad range of marine mammals, seabirds and other species which depend on the area for their survival. The Qikiqtait Study Area has a productive benthic invertebrate community, migratory Arctic Char (*Salvelinus alpinus*) important for both subsistence foods and as a prey species for marine mammals, resident marine mammals such as Atlantic Walrus (*Odobenus rosmarus rosmarus*), Bearded Seal (*Erignathus barbatus*), Beluga (*Delphinapterus leucas*), Polar Bear (*Ursus maritimus*), Ringed Seal (*Pusa hispida*). The region is also an important feeding and calving area for a many marine mammal species. In addition, the following species are known to frequent the area on a seasonal basis: Killer Whale (*Orcinus orca*), Bowhead Whale (*Balaena mysticetus*), Harp Seal (*Pagophilus groenlandicus*) and Narwhal

(*Monodon monoceros*). The area also maintains large year-round aggregations of Common Eider (*Somateria mollissima sedentaria*) The seafloor of the proposed Qikiqtait Marine Protected Area (MPA) harbors a diverse benthic community that is heavily influenced by river runoff and seasonal ice cover. The polynya to the west and on the northern end of the Belcher Islands have among the highest biomass values and taxonomic richness in the Hudson Bay region.

Description of Existing Environment: Socio-economic Environment

A socio-economic analysis completed by DFO's Policy and Economic Sector in 2024 indicated that activities occurring in the Qikiqtait Study Area include annual sealift operations, icebreaking activities, marine research vessel activity, subsistence and traditional wildlife harvesting, recreational activities, and tourism. Additional socio-economic activities were informed through community consultations as well as industry and stakeholder engagement. These additional activities include the harvesting of Eider duck down for commercial purposes, marine plants are harvested to make baskets for sale, and media and filming activities occur in the area. There is currently no oil and gas development in the area, nor mining operations. The socio-economic analysis, community consultations, and industry and stakeholder engagement informed the proposed regulations described in the attached Qikiqtait Project Description document. The following is a short summary from the attached document: Qikiqtait Socio-Economic Report. Inuit Culture (pages 25- 26): The importance and influence of this biologically rich area extends beyond the proposed boundaries and in turn ensures the survival of Inuit culture and the ability of Inuit to sustain their traditional ways of life in the Arctic. For people living in the Arctic, hunting, gathering, fishing, and processing of food are a vital part of social, cultural, and economic life in the North. Tourism (pages 21-22): Tourist activities in and around Sanikiluaq include fishing, hunting, wildlife viewing, canoeing. Guides offer sight-seeing tours on expedition cruise vessels. Fisheries (page 11-13): Subsistence fishing is prevalent in the region providing essential nutrients to communities. The Sanikiluaq Hunters and Trappers Association currently holds an Aboriginal Communal Fishing Licence allowing for the community of Sanikiluaq to explore an emerging fisheries for benthic organisms such as Icelandic scallop (*Chlamys islandica*) and Sea cucumber (*Cucumaria frondose*). Shipping (pages 19-21): Marine infrastructure in Sanikiluaq, and other Arctic communities, is quite minimal and has been designed for basic community freight needs. Qikiqtait is commonly used for resupply efforts as it offers a more direct path that allows for shipment goods that support land-based economic activity.

Miscellaneous Project Information

1. A more detailed description of the consultations and engagements undertaken is provided in a separate "Consultation and Engagement Summary" document and in the "What We Heard" Report, both included in this submission. As detailed in the report, much of the feedback provided by Sanikiluarmit emphasized the need to explore inshore fisheries development in conjunction with the establishment of a Marine Protected Area. The Sanikiluaq Hunters and Trappers Association currently holds an Aboriginal Communal Fishing Licence allowing for the community of Sanikiluaq to explore an emerging fisheries for benthic organisms such as Icelandic scallop (*Chlamys islandica*) and Sea cucumber (*Cucumaria frondose*). Additional consultation and research is required to determine the sustainability of these potential commercial fisheries. The proposed Ministerial Order MPA would allow for fishing to continue as a class of ongoing activities and therefore would not impact this work. Please see attached supporting document titled "Qikiqtait Support Letters" which contains letters of support from the Sanikiluaq Hunters and Trappers Association, the Sanikiluaq Hamlet Council and the Arctic Eider Society. 2. It is difficult to see the details of the Qikiqtait boundary through the mapping program on the NIRB website. The proposed Qikiqtait Marine Protected Area only includes the marine environment, starting at the low water mark. A map of Qikiqtait is included in the supporting documents showing additional details of the boundaries.

Identification of Impacts and Proposed Mitigation Measures

There will be a positive net impact of the proposed conservation measures. The Government of Canada has committed to supporting Inuit leadership and collaboration on marine conservation initiatives to safeguard ecosystems, wildlife and Inuit culture, while supporting sustainable employment, economic diversification, building critical infrastructure and reinforcing financial stability that enable healthy communities. Protecting Qikiqtait will address Inuit conservation goals and advance Inuit leadership in the region. The objective of pursuing a Ministerial Order MPA is to conserve and protect this ecologically significant area while Fisheries and Oceans Canada and its Inuit and northern partners explore long-term protection options for the area, including an Inuit Protected and Conserved Area (IPCA). Marine protection through a ministerial order MPA

under the Oceans Act will prevent new activities in the area that may pose an ecological risk to its species and habitats. The proposed Order will also provide time for research to continue to collect information to support informed decision-making around long-term protection in Qikiqtait. This approach supports QIA's regional and integrated approach to conservation for the Qikiqtani Region and seeks to advance reconciliation and promote Inuit self-determination. A Marine Protected Area by Ministerial Order under the Oceans Act also aligns with Canada's Inuit Nunangat Policy, which was jointly developed with Inuit to ensure that all new federal policies, programs, services, and initiatives that apply in Inuit Nunangat and/or benefit Inuit are designed to support Inuit self-determination, prosperity and wellbeing (individual and community) throughout Inuit Nunangat with the goal of socio-economic and cultural equity between Inuit and other Canadians. The Qikiqtani Inuit Association (QIA) and the Government of Canada have been negotiating a joint Inuit Impact and Benefit Agreement (IIBA) for the proposed Qikiqtait and Sarvarjuaq MPAs as well as the Qikiqtait Nunangit, a terrestrial Inuit Protected and Conserved Area (IPCA) to be established on Inuit Owned Lands by QIA. Fisheries and Oceans Canada has led the negotiations on behalf of the federal government, which also includes Environment and Climate Change Canada and Transport Canada. The IIBA negotiations are still ongoing. The Nunavut Agreement requires that an IIBA be negotiated and signed before areas can be conserved and protected. Negotiators have made significant progress on this IIBA and matters of Inuit-led governance and stewardship as they relate to these important areas. Inuit stewardship and governance will be grounded in Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit, and aligned with a sustainable regional protected area model. This progress highlights Canada's journey toward reconciliation with Inuit and support for Inuit self-determination. Additional benefits will be seen through the Qikiqtani Project Finance for Permanence, also referred to as Sinaa. Sinaa is an innovative conservation financing model that leverages government and private funding to support the long-term protection of lands and waters including a shared commitment to working toward the Qikiqtani Regional Conservation Vision. In October 2023, QIA, the Government of Canada and Pew Charitable Trusts signed an Agreement in Principle to advance Sinaa. Sinaa aims to protect and conserve marine and terrestrial areas through the establishment of federal conservation tools and Inuit Protected and Conserved Areas. The Sinaa agreement names Qikiqtait (marine and terrestrial) as one of the conservation areas that will be designated by QIA as an Inuit Protected and Conserved Area in the future. The Government of Canada has committed \$200 million to the agreement. Some of the benefits that will be seen by Inuit as a result of the agreement include the expansion of QIA's Nauttiqsuqtiit program into more Qikiqtani communities, which provides increased employment for Inuit in the region. Further information about this agreement can be found on QIA's website: https://www.qia.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/2023-11-07-summary-of-aip-closing-condition_draft.pdf

Cumulative Effects

The establishment of conservation areas in Canada are intended to mitigate the cumulative impacts of human activities and climate change. Establishment of the proposed Qikiqtait MPA will have no significant adverse effects on the ecosystem or Inuit harvesting activities. The proposed MPA will have no significant adverse socio-economic effects and will enhance and protect the existing and future well-being of Inuit. There will be an Inuit Impact and Benefit Agreement that supports the Qikiqtani Inuit Association's vision for Inuit-led governance and stewardship for the proposed Qikiqtait MPA. Inuit stewardship and governance will be grounded in Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit, and align with a sustainable regional protected area model.

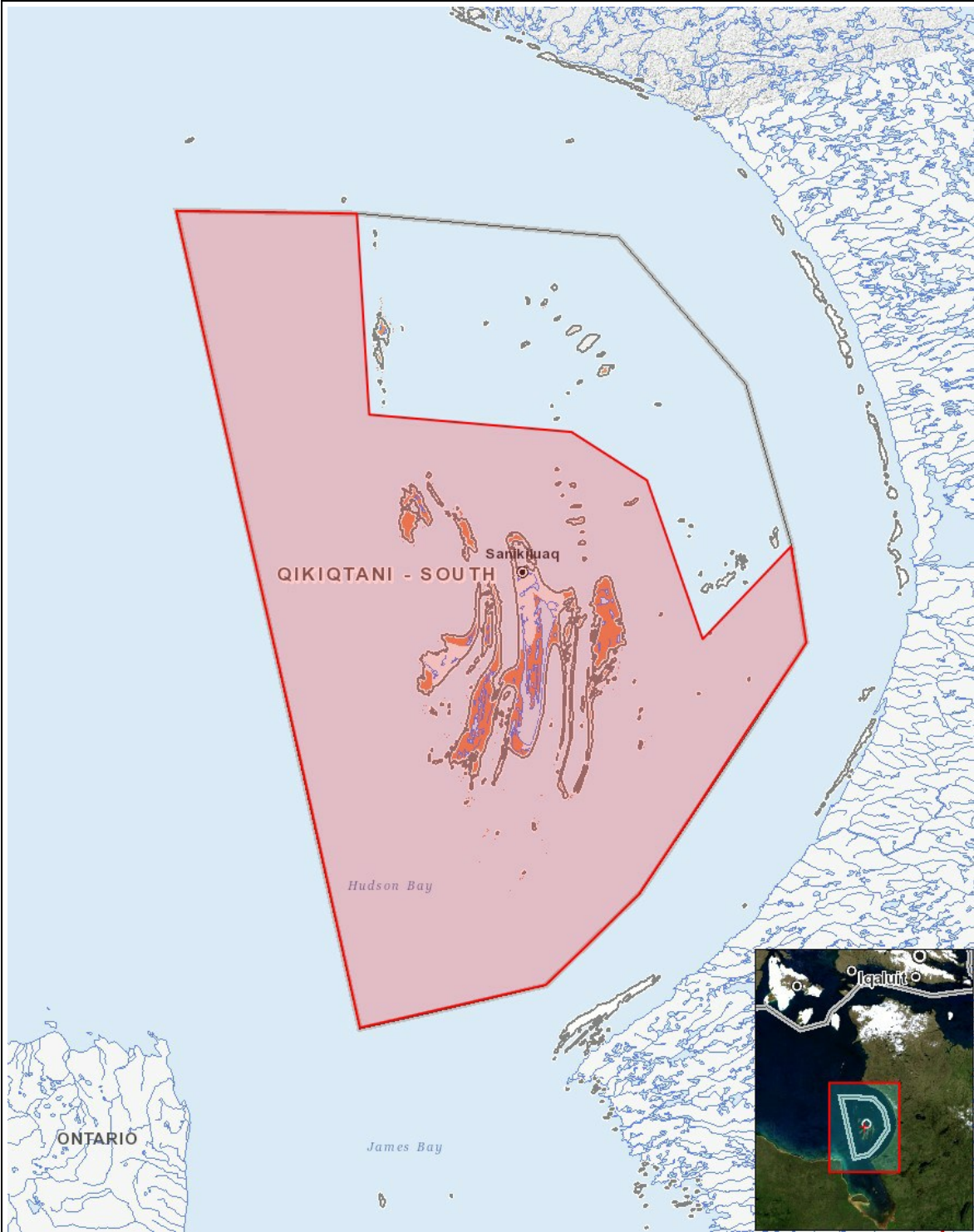
Impacts

Identification of Environmental Impacts

	PHYSICAL	Designated environmental areas	Ground stability	Permafrost	Hydrology / Limnology	Water quality	Climate conditions	Eskers and other unique or fragile landscapes	Surface and bedrock geology	Sediment and soil quality	Tidal processes and bathymetry	Air quality	Noise levels	BIOLOGICAL	Vegetation	Wildlife, including habitat and migration patterns	Birds, including habitat and migration patterns	Aquatic species, incl. habitat and migration/spawning	Wildlife protected areas	SOCIO-ECONOMIC	Archaeological and cultural historic sites	Employment	Community wellness	Community infrastructure	Human health
Construction																									
-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Operation																									
Other	P	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	P	P	P	P	-	-	P	P	-	-	-
Decommissioning																									
-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

(P = Positive, N = Negative and non-mitigatable, M = Negative and mitigatable, U = Unknown)

Project Location



List of Project Geometries

1	polygon	Qikiqtait MPA Boundary
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