



NIRB Application for Screening #126016

Sarvarjuaq Marine Protected Area by Ministerial Order

Application Type: New

Project Type: Other

Application Date: 12/10/2024 12:50:52 PM

Period of operation: from 2025-06-24 to 2030-06-23

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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 Sarvarjuaq Study Area as a first step towards establishing long-term protection. The protection measure being proposed is a MPA by Ministerial Order (or "Order") under the Oceans Act, s35.1(2), which would freeze the footprint of ongoing activities in the Sarvarjuaq 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 Sarvarjuaq 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 Sarvarjuaq Study Area is an Ecologically and Biologically Significant Area (DFO, 2011) located in the Canadian waters between Canada's Arctic Archipelago and Greenland, and encompasses part of the North Water Polynya. The significance of the North Water Polynya and the need for marine protection in this area has been recognized for many years, most recently (from 2013 to 2017) with Greenlandic and Canadian communities adjacent to the North Water Polynya working with the Inuit Circumpolar Council to identify and publish joint priorities on Inuit-led conservation and monitoring of the region (ICCC, 2017). The Sarvarjuaq 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. The North Water Polynya, one of the largest recurring polynyas in the Arctic, heavily influences the region and promotes ecologically significant features such as; seasonally early and reliable productivity, high biodiversity, critical habitat for migratory species, and important feeding and breeding grounds for a wide range of Arctic marine animals. Under the Order, any activity that has occurred in the Sarvarjuaq 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 Sarvarjuaq 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 in the Nunavut Settlement Area, as provided for in the Nunavut Agreement. In 2023/24, the Qikiqtait and Sarvarjuaq Working Group identified a preliminary list of activities occurring in the Sarvarjuaq 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 vessel transportation of materials from the Mary River iron ore mine, commercial fishing activities, cruise ship activities, and media and filming activities. Partner input, community consultations, and industry and stakeholder engagement informed the list of ongoing activities in this area. Between October 2023 and June 2024, DFO and QIA conducted community consultations with each of the six communities adjacent to the Sarvarjuaq Study Area (Clyde River, Qikiqtarjuaq, Pond Inlet, Arctic Bay, Resolute Bay and Grise Fiord). These consultations were to present information about the Ministerial Order MPA process, to seek input on the regulatory intent, and to seek information about the uses of the area. The joint community consultation also included presentations from QIA on their vision for the area. The Government of Nunavut was present as observers for all community consultations. In each of the six communities, two rounds of meetings were held with the Hunters and Trappers Associations (HTAs), hamlet councils and open-house meetings for members of the broader community. All six communities expressed their support for advancing marine protection in the proposed Sarvarjuaq MPA and for the objectives developed for the area. Communities further voiced their support of continued coordination and collaboration across the Qikiqtani communities and with Greenlandic communities for long-term protection and management of the North Water Polynya as a whole. In September 2024, the Working Group sought community input on a "What We Heard" report,

[illegible]

[illegible]

Inuinnaqtun: N/A

Personnel

Personnel on site: 0

Days on site: 0

Total Person days: 0

Operations Phase: from 2025-06-24 to 2030-06-23

Activities

Location	Activity Type	Land Status	Site history	Site archaeological or paleontological value	Proximity to the nearest communities and any protected areas
Sarvarjuaq MPA Boundary	Other	Marine	The proposed Sarvarjuaq Marine Protected Area (MPA) is a significant ecological area for many Arctic marine species and has unique physical features such as the North Water Polynya. The proposed MPA would be established in the marine environment only, starting at the low water mark.	Inuit have travelled to this area for generations. There are important harvesting areas, and cultural significance as a connection between Inuit in Canada and Greenland.	Grise Fiord is the nearest community to the proposed Sarvarjuaq Marine Protected Area. Other communities involved in the consultation process also include Arctic Bay, Resolute Bay, Pond Inlet, Clyde River and Qikiqtarjuaq. All six Hunters and Trappers Association and the Hamlet Councils have provided letters of support for the establishment of the proposed Sarvarjuaq MPA.

Community Involvement & Regional Benefits

Community	Name	Organization	Date Contacted
Pond Inlet	Organization Representatives	Pond Inlet Hamlet Council	2023-10-24
Pond Inlet	Organization Representatives	Mittimatalik Hunters and Trappers Association	2023-10-24
Pond Inlet	Community Members	Pond Inlet Community	2023-10-24
Pond Inlet	Organization Representatives	Mittimatalik Hunters and Trappers Association	2024-05-13
Pond Inlet	Organization Representatives	Pond Inlet Hamlet Council	2024-05-13
Pond Inlet	Community Members	Pond Inlet Community	2024-05-13
Clyde River	Organization Representatives	Nangmoutaq Hunters and Trappers Association	2023-10-25
Clyde River	Organization Representatives	Clyde River Hamlet Council	2023-10-25
Clyde River	Community Members	Clyde River Community	2024-10-25
Clyde River	Organization Representatives	Nangmoutaq Hunters and Trappers Association	2024-05-15
Clyde River	Organization Representatives	Clyde River Hamlet Council	2024-05-15

Clyde River	Community Members	Clyde River Community	2024-05-15
Qikiqtarjuaq	Organization Representatives	Nattivak Hunters and Trappers Association	2023-10-26
Qikiqtarjuaq	Organization Representatives	Qikiqtarjuaq Hamlet Council	2023-10-26
Qikiqtarjuaq	Community Members	Qikiqtarjuaq Community	2023-10-26
Qikiqtarjuaq	Organization Representatives	Nattivak Hunters and Trappers Association	2024-05-16
Qikiqtarjuaq	Organization Representatives	Qikiqtarjuaq Hamlet Council	2024-05-16
Qikiqtarjuaq	Community Members	Qikiqtarjuaq Community	2024-05-16
Arctic Bay	Organization Representatives	Ikajutit Hunters and Trappers Association	2024-01-17
Arctic Bay	Organization Representatives	Arctic Bay Hamlet Council	2024-01-17
Arctic Bay	Community Members	Arctic Bay Community Members	2024-01-17
Arctic Bay	Organization Representatives	Ikajutit Hunters and Trappers Association	2024-06-04
Arctic Bay	Organization Representatives	Arctic Bay Hamlet Council	2024-06-04
Arctic Bay	Community Members	Arctic Bay Community	2024-06-04
Resolute Bay	Organization Representatives	Resolute Bay Hunters and Trappers Association	2024-01-14
Resolute Bay	Organization Representatives	Resolute Bay Hamlet Council	2024-01-14
Resolute Bay	Community Members	Resolute Bay Community	2024-01-14
Resolute Bay	Organization Representatives	Resolute Bay Hunters and Trappers Association	2024-06-05
Resolute Bay	Organization Representatives	Resolute Bay Hamlet Council	2024-06-05
Resolute Bay	Community Members	Resolute Bay Community	2024-06-05
Grise Fiord	Organization Representatives	Iviq Hunters and Trappers Association	2024-01-18
Grise Fiord	Organization Representatives	Grise Fiord Hamlet Council	2024-01-18
Grise Fiord	Community Members	Grise Fiord Community	2024-01-18
Grise Fiord	Organization Representatives	Iviq Hunters and Trappers Association	2024-06-06
Grise Fiord	Organization Representatives	Grise Fiord Hamlet Council	2024-06-06
Grise Fiord	Community Members	Grise Fiord Community	2024-06-06

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 Sarvarjuaq 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: Identification of Ecological Significance Knowledge Gaps and Stressors for the North Water and Adjacent Areas - English (pages 2-3 and 7-10 for more detail). The proposed Sarvarjuaq Marine Protected Area (MPA) is a distinctive geographic and oceanographic region in northern Baffin Bay, characterized by one of the largest recurring polynyas in the Arctic. The importance of the region is attributed to patterns of atmospheric and oceanic circulation producing dominant north winds and ocean currents pushing sea ice from the Arctic Ocean south through Baffin Bay. Narrow channels promote the formation of ice bridges in Nares Strait, Kane Basin, and Smith Sound, preventing the southward movement of sea ice, and leading to reduced sea ice cover south of Smith Sound. The area has nutrient rich waters that originate from both the Arctic and the North Atlantic. Ocean circulation patterns and winds encourage the upwelling or upward mixing of the nutrients from deeper waters that originate in the Pacific and Atlantic. There is also an extended ice-free (or reduced ice cover) season that promotes a long productive period. Glaciers are important features in the vicinity of Sarvarjuaq and meltwater from glaciers and ice caps likely comprise the greatest source of local freshwater runoff into the region. Sarvarjuaq functions as a natural component for climate change mitigation as the region is considered a sink for human produced carbon dioxide.

Description of Existing Environment: Biological Environment

Summary from attached document: Identification of Ecological Significance Knowledge Gaps and Stressors for the North Water and Adjacent Areas - English (pages 2-4 and 13-21). The North Water Polynya is one of the largest polynyas in the Arctic, and is well known for its seasonally early and reliable productivity, as well as its high biodiversity. The polynya provides critical habitat for a number of marine mammal species, such as Atlantic Walrus (*Odobenus rosmarus rosmarus*), Beluga (*Delphinapterus leucas*) and Bowhead Whale (*Balaena mysticetus*), Narwhal (*Monodon monoceros*), Ringed Seal (*Pusa hispida*), Bearded Seal (*Erignathus barbatus*), and Polar Bear (*Ursus maritimus*), as well as sea birds, fish and other marine life. Sarvarjuaq's biological importance can be attributed to the early and predictable phytoplankton (microscopic plants) blooms. This region supports a high diversity of Arctic species, from lower trophic feeders to fishes and marine mammals. The early phytoplankton blooms, which form the basis of the food web, are supported by reduced sea ice cover. These blooms are fundamental to the ecosystem by promoting zooplankton blooms that feed higher trophic levels. This cycle is fundamental to the health of the entire ecosystem. Sarvarjuaq and the surrounding area is a vital feeding site for millions of migratory seabirds. The North Water Polynya hosts the world's largest aggregation of Dovekie/Little Auk, and some of the largest colonies of Thick-billed Murres and Black-legged Kittiwakes. Other important colonies of birds include Common Eiders, King Eiders, and Sabine's Gull.

Description of Existing Environment: Socio-economic Environment

A socio-economic analysis was completed by DFO's Policy and Economic Sector in 2024. The majority of economic activity for Sarvarjuaq falls within the categories of natural resource management and eco/cultural tourism. Activities identified through the socio-economic analysis include annual sealift operations, vessel transportation of materials from the Mary River iron ore mine, icebreaking activities, passenger and cruise ship traffic, marine research vessel activity, media and filming activities, subsistence and traditional wildlife harvesting, recreational activities, and tourism. 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: Sarvarjuaq Socio-Economic Report. Inuit Culture (page 29): Inuit recognize Sarvarjuaq and its surrounding area as a critical habitat and ecological feature that supports the region's biodiversity and, in turn, their livelihoods. For at least 4500 years, the Sarvarjuaq region and the larger international Pikialasorsuaq region (encompassing Greenlandic waters) has been an important hunting ground, providing Inuit with resources such as cultural and spiritual well-being, food, clothing and tools. Commercial fishing (page 13): The proposed Sarvarjuaq boundaries overlaps with the boundaries of the North Atlantic Fishing Organization fishing division 0A (the northern area off the coast of Baffin Island), which includes management units for Greenland Halibut. Commercial shrimp fishing is authorized in fishing zone SFA0 which overlaps with the Sarvarjuaq boundaries; however, quantities fished are not known at this time. Based on a scan of DFO fishing logbook data, it appears that very limited commercial fishing activities have taken place to date within Sarvarjuaq, and no known commercial fishing activities have taken place since 2007. Subsistence Harvesting (pages 13 and 14): Inuit communities have historically relied on the wealth of marine life around the Sarvarjuaq area for their food, clothing, shelter, and essential cultural and economic well-being. Community members engage in subsistence harvesting for marine fishes, sea birds, and marine mammals in the area. Some of the stocks of Narwhal, Beluga, Walrus and seals harvested are likely to migrate through (and spend some time within) Sarvarjuaq. Mining and Mineral Exploration (pages 15-16): There are no known active mineral claims or mineral leases in and around Sarvarjuaq. Natural Resources Canada conducted an assessment (document attached) and determined that the petroleum potential in the southern portion of Sarvarjuaq is low-medium, and low to very low in the northern portion of Sarvarjuaq. There is currently a moratorium on new oil and gas exploration licensing that applies to the Canadian areas in and around Sarvarjuaq. Shipping (pages 18-19): There are commercial shipping and other vessel activities in Sarvarjuaq such as Icebreaking vessels, passenger vessels, pleasure crafts, transit vessels, cargo and resupply. Recreation and tourism (page 21): Cruise ship landings include activities such as anchoring and the use of zodiacs to transfer crew and passengers from the cruise ship to land. Decreasing sea ice and a longer ice-free season have led to an increase in cruise vessel visits in Nunavut and the Qikiqtani region. Cruise ship traffic in Nunavut generally routes through the southern portion of Sarvarjuaq. Scientific research expeditions also take place within Sarvarjuaq.

Miscellaneous Project Information

1. The proposed Sarvarjuaq Marine Protected Area was developed in collaboration with Inuit and northern partners. Consultations focused on the six communities in closest proximity to the proposed Sarvarjuaq MPA: Grise Fiord, Resolute Bay, Arctic Bay, Pond Inlet, Clyde River, and Qikiqtarjuaq. A detailed description of the partnerships, 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. Please also see attached supporting document titled "Sarvarjuaq Support Letters" which contains letters of support from all six communities' Hunters and Trappers Organizations and Hamlet Councils. 2. It is difficult to see the details of the Sarvarjuaq boundary through the mapping program on the NIRB website. The proposed Sarvarjuaq Marine Protected Area only includes the marine environment, starting at the low water mark. A map of Sarvarjuaq is included in the attached Sarvarjuaq Project Description document 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 Sarvarjuaq 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 Sarvarjuaq. 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 Qaujimajatuqangit, 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 Sarvarjuaq 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 Nauttiguqtiit 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 Sarvarjuaq 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 Sarvarjuaq MPA. Inuit stewardship and governance will be grounded in Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, and align with a sustainable regional protected area model.

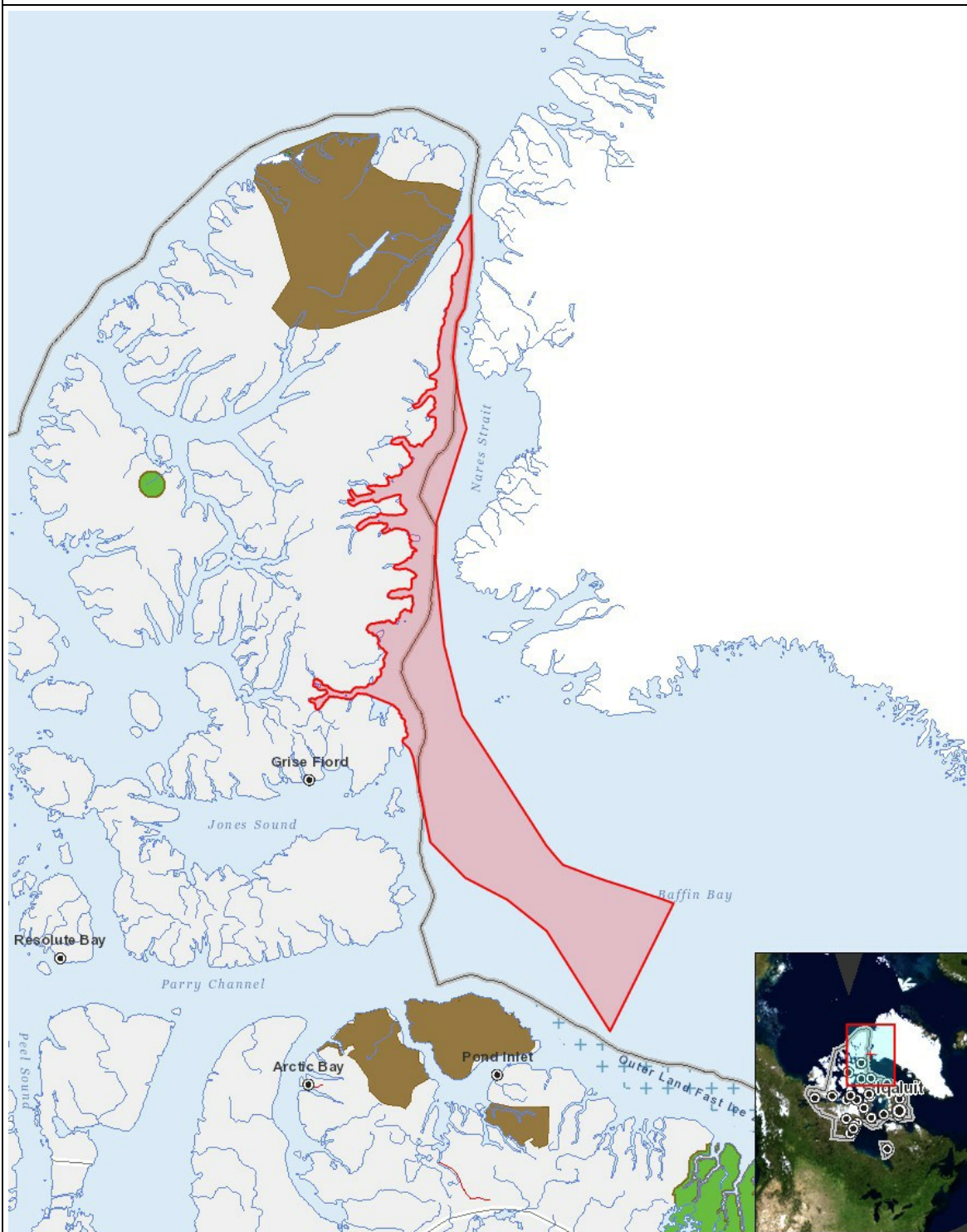
Impacts

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	Sarvarjuaq MPA Boundary
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