

NPC 150574: Sarvarjuaq Marine Protected Area by Ministerial Order

Close

Proposal Status: Conformity Determination Issued

Overview Documents

Project Overview

Type of application: New

Proponent name: Lauren Candlish

Proponent company: Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO)

Project Description:

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-led Protected and Conserved Area (IPCA). 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. 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 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 proposed area for the Order is at the entrance to Smith Sound, in Nares Strait in Northern Baffin Bay; extending both North and South, while cutting across the international boundary between Canada and Greenland. 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. In addition, physical features such as oceanic circulation patterns, a high presence of glaciers, freshwater runoff and recurring ice bridges contribute to this region's uniqueness. 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. There is currently a moratorium on oil and gas development in the area. 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, summarizing the feedback provided by the six communities during these consultation processes. In September and October 2024, letters in support of the proposed regulation were received from the six community HTAs and Hamlet Councils as well as from the Government of Nunavut. Stakeholder groups engaged in this process included, but were not limited to: the Nunavut Water Board, Nunavut Wildlife Management Board, Qikiqtaaluk Wildlife Board, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc., Inuit Circumpolar Council, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGOS), commercial fishing industry, shipping industry, tourism and cruise ship industries, oil and gas and mining industries, tour operators, and academia. In July 2024, letters were distributed to industry and other stakeholders requesting information about the ongoing activities conducted within the proposed boundaries of Sarvarjuaq. A second set of letters were distributed in October 2024 seeking input on the regulatory intent for the proposed Sarvarjuaq MPA. DFO is submitting this proposal with the intent of providing the NPC with an opportunity to assess the proposal and of meeting the Government of Canada's obligations under the Nunavut Agreement.

Project Schedule

Start Date: 2025-07-01

End Date: 2030-06-30

Project Map

List of project geometries:

Id	Geometry	Location Name
14092	polygon	3601251.61402999980

NPC Planning regions:

North Baffin

Project Land Use and Authorizations

Project Land Use:

Other

Licensing Agencies:

Government of Canada - Fisheries and Oceans Canada

Material Use

Equipment:

Type	Quantity	Type	Use
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No data found

Fuel Use:

Type	Container	Capacity	Use
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No data found

Hazardous Material and Chemical Use:

Type	Container	Capacity	Use
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No data found

Water Consumption:

Daily Amount (m2)	Retrieval Method	Retrieval Location
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Waste and Impacts

Environmental Impacts:

N/A

Waste Management:

Waste Type	Quantity Generated	Treatment Method	Disposal Method
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No data found