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We, Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO), are proposing to continue the following community-led beluga research program in Kinngait to coincide with the walrus work.

Our objective is to better understand marine mammals (beluga and walrus) surrounding Kinngait with increased shipping with the construction of Baffinland's Steensby Port in Foxe Basin. We have proposed the same sampling methods as the walrus project listed below, with the addition of drone imagery and hydrophone deployment.

- Collection of skin and blubber biopsies using CO₂ guns (airguns) by a research team (4-6 local research assistants) in boats. Skin samples will be analysed for genetics in an assessment of beluga stock structure.
- Remote deployment of satellite tags using crossbows (NOTE: tags will be placed onto the upper back; beluga will not be anaesthetized). Satellite tagging will be done from boats or land by 4-6 local research assistants. Movement data from the tags will be used to address questions related to beluga distribution and movements (e.g. stock structure, impacts of shipping).
- To collect drone footage of beluga. We would fly the drone from the shore/ice or boat at a minimum height of 20 meters to ensure we do not disturb the animals. The drone will fly directly overhead to ensure we get a straight down view of the whales, to gather information on body condition.
- Deploying a hydrophone to collect recordings of underwater sound. Baseline acoustic data is important prior to the shipping corridor and will be used to address questions related to marine mammal distribution in the area.

The proposed work is an expansion of community-led field work on walrus in collaboration with DFO over the past couple of years to now include beluga. In the following pages we have included summaries about the different parts of the project for your review.

Please let us know if you approve each aspect of the work by writing an X next to the projects you support above for 2025.



 Signature

March 13. ~~2025~~ 2025

 Date

Questions/comments:

