

07 April 2025
NPC File No. 150692

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Dear Cassel Kapolak, Fish & Fish Habitat Protection Program, Jared Ottenhof, Brenda Pilapski, Carson Gillis, and Marianne Marcoux:

RE: NPC File No. 150692 [Beluga biopsy, tagging, acoustics, and drone work]

The following works and activities have been proposed in the above-noted project proposal:

1. AMENDMENT to marine-based scientific research activities on beluga whales and walrus. Walrus and beluga are known to be sensitive to shipping-related disturbance, but there has been very little research carried out in Canada. Results from these two projects will be used to assess spatial and temporal overlaps between critical habitat and shipping corridors, detect behavioral (foraging, resting, vocalizing) and distribution responses to shipping activity, and develop mitigation measures (e.g., buffer zones around important terrestrial and marine habitat).
 - a. Use of community-hired boats to access study
 - b. Use of drones and hydrophones to capture imagery and acoustic data
 - c. Use of crossbows and airguns for satellite tagging and biopsy darting and sampling
 - d. Methodology to be used across the project:
 - i. satellite tags to collect distribution, movement and diving data (both walrus and beluga)
 - ii. time-lapse stationary cameras and aerial drone imagery (only walrus to monitor haul-out patterns)
 - iii. hydrophone recordings (e.g., vocalizations of walrus and beluga and shipping noise)

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- iv. tissue biopsies (e.g., both walrus and beluga, for analysis of stress hormone concentrations)
 - v. drone footage to monitor haul-outs (walrus) and gather behavioural health metrics (beluga).
- 2. Summary of proposed modifications:
 - a. Project modified to include **additional study areas** and has been developed, with guidance from NPC and NIRB, to combine similar field activities into one application
 - b. Use of above methods on beluga and walrus in new study areas – not all communities have approved study of both species and all methods; these details are described in the project description
- 3. Project schedule is seasonal over three-year period:
 - a. 1 August 2025 to 30 October 2028
- 4. Associated NPC File No.: 150413; Associated NIRB File No.: 24YN025
- 5. Location: Qikiqtani and Kivalliq Region (Keewatin Planning Region); [coast and waters near communities of Igloolik, Sanirajak, Kinngait, Coral Harbour, and Nauyasat]

A complete description of the project proposal reviewed by the Nunavut Planning Commission (NPC) can be accessed online using the link below.

The works and activities associated with this proposal were previously reviewed by the NPC, including biopsy sampling, tagging, camera, hydrophone, and drone work on beluga and walrus, and a conformity determination was issued on 23 May 2024 which still applies. In addition, associated activities were previously screened by the Nunavut Impact Review Board (NIRB File No. 24YN025). The project proposal conforms to the Keewatin Regional Land Use Plan (KRLUP) and the proponent has undertaken to comply with the applicable conformity requirements of Appendices C, G, and H of the KRLUP.

The NPC has determined that the above-noted project proposal is a significant modification to the project because of the additional study areas and research activities within. The project proposal requires screening by the NIRB under section 12.4.3 of the *Nunavut Agreement* as amended because it is for a component or activity that was not part of the original proposal, and its inclusion is a significant modification of the project.

By way of this letter, the NPC is forwarding the project proposal with this determination to the NIRB for screening. Project materials are available at the following address:

<https://lupit.nunavut.ca/portal/registry/registry.aspx?appid=150692>.

The regulatory authorities to which this letter is addressed are responsible under the *Nunavut Planning and Project Assessment Act* (NuPPAA) to implement any of the applicable requirements by incorporating the requirements directly, or otherwise ensuring that they must be met, in the terms and conditions of any authorizations issued.

This conformity determination applies only to the above noted project proposal as submitted. Proponents may not carry out projects and regulatory authorities may not issue licenses, permits, and other authorizations in respect of projects if a review by the NPC is required. Regulatory authorities may consult with the NPC to obtain recommendations on their duties to implement the existing land use plans prior to issuing licenses, permits, and other authorizations under subsection 69(6) of the NuPPAA.

My office would be pleased to discuss how best to implement the applicable requirements and to review any draft authorizations that regulatory authorities wish to provide for that purpose.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at the email or telephone number below.

Sincerely,



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