



Fisheries and Oceans
Canada

Pêches et Océans
Canada

January 14, 2025

Dear Hunters and Trappers Organization board members,

An aerial survey is planned for Western Hudson Bay (WHB) in the summer of 2025 to update the abundance estimate for WHB beluga population. The survey will use a combination of aerial photography in estuaries, where the highest densities of animals are expected, and visual surveys, in areas where lower densities of beluga are expected. We will hire observers to assist with the survey from the adjacent communities and are requesting recommendations for staff of people who are interested. All equipment and training needed for the survey will be provided by Fisheries and Oceans Canada.

The WHB beluga population has been studied through aerial survey and satellite tracking in the 1980's, early 2000's and most recently in 2015. Data collected suggest that the population has been relatively stable. However, recent changes such as increased shipping traffic and potentially increased hunt pressure warrant an update to the abundance estimate for this population as the last survey was conducted ten years ago. The survey will be designed to cover the summer range of belugas in western and southern Hudson Bay following past survey efforts (2004 and 2015), and beluga satellite tracking data.

Surveys will include a crew of four visual observers as well as one camera operator, and will be flown in two Twin Otter planes fitted with four bubble windows and a camera port. Surveys will be conducted at an altitude of 305 m for visual portions and 610 m for photographic portions. Both planes will be based out of Churchill for the duration of the survey.

Please indicate if you support the survey below:

_____ **Support**

_____ **Do not support**

Thank you,

Marianne Marcoux, Research Scientist

Fisheries and Oceans Canada

