



NIRB File No.: 25YN066
Commission File No.: 150867

September 10, 2025

Tracey Loewen
Fisheries and Oceans Canada
Winnipeg, MB
R3T 2N6

Sent via email: tracey.loewen@dfo-mpo.gc.ca

Re: Notice of Screening for Fisheries and Oceans Canada's "Coastal Baseline Inventory: Benthic community composition and food web structure in water adjacent to Qikiqtarjuaq, NU 2025" project proposal

Dear Tracey Loewen:

On August 7, 2025 the Nunavut Impact Review Board (NIRB) received a referral to screen Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO)'s "Coastal Baseline Inventory: Benthic community composition and food web structure in water adjacent to Qikiqtarjuaq, NU 2025" project proposal from the Nunavut Planning Commission (Commission), which noted that the project proposal is outside the area of an applicable regional land use plan. On August 27, 2025, the NIRB received the complete application from the Proponent.

Pursuant to Article 12, Sections 12.4.1 and 12.4.4 of the *Agreement between the Inuit of the Nunavut Settlement Area and Her Majesty the Queen in right of Canada (Nunavut Agreement)* and s. 87 of the *Nunavut Planning and Project Assessment Act*, S.C. 2013, c. 14, s. 2 (*NuPPAA*), the NIRB has commenced screening this project proposal and has assigned it file number **25YN066** - please reference this file number in all future related correspondence.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Project Scope:

All documents received and pertaining to this project proposal can be accessed from the NIRB's online public registry at www.nirb.ca/project/126224.

Project:	Coastal Baseline Inventory: Benthic community composition and food web structure in water adjacent to Qikiqtarjuaq, NU 2025
Location:	Qikiqtani region, near the community Qikiqtarjuaq

Summary of Project Description:	The Proponent intends to conduct research activities to collect baseline data on benthic habitat and species to determine the current conditions near Qikiqtarjuaq and allow examinations of effects of climate change or human development activities on these species.
Project Proposed Timeline:	August 2025 to October 2026, during the open water season

According to the project proposal, the scope of the project includes the following undertakings, works or activities:

- Conduct bottom trawling six (6) to eight (8) times per day to capture Greenland Halibut, sculpins and Northern shrimps;
- Use of four (4) traps to capture shrimp and benthic invertebrates on a 12 hourly basis;
- Use of a baited camera system at each sampling station to collect data on the sea floor traps habitat characteristics and record observations on species not caught in the trawl and traps;
- Conduct conductivity, temperature, and depth (CTD) casts to obtain vertical profiles of the water column
- Use of vertical zooplankton net tow to collect sample of local zooplankton communities;
- Collection of tissues samples from all species encountered to determine their diets and for stable isotope analysis (to be analyzed in Winnipeg);
- Use of *Patrick and William* research vessel to conduct the marine research activities;
 - Use of fuel for the marine vessel and onboard power generation;
 - Use of a reverse osmosis desalination system to create potable water;
 - Storage of hazardous materials onboard as needed;
 - Storage of waste on vessel and disposed of at an appropriate facility;
- Hiring of members from Nattivak Hunters and Trappers Association (HTA) to assist in research activities;
- Use of local facilities and accommodations, including the Qikiqtarjuaq Research Station; and,
- Reporting on research results on an annual basis to the HTA and Nunavut communities.

Inclusion or Exclusion of Scoping List

At this time, the NIRB has identified no additional work or activities in relation to the project proposal. As a result, the NIRB will proceed with screening the project based on the scope as described above.

REQUEST FOR COMMENTS

All documents received can be accessed from the NIRB's online public registry at www.nirb.ca/project/126224 and include:

- *Commission Conformity Determination and Application*
- *NIRB Online Application Form in English*
- *Non-technical Summary in English, French and Inuktitut*
- *Nattivak HTA Approval Form*
- *University of Windsor Animal Care Committee – Animal Utilization Project Proposal*

The NIRB will copy you on screening process related correspondence and upload related documents to the NIRB's online registry for public access. The NIRB may request additional information at any time during the process.

The NIRB is copying parties and municipalities potentially affected by DFO project proposal with this letter, and we invite interested parties to comment directly to the NIRB by **September 22, 2025**.

The NIRB would like parties to provide comments regarding:

- Whether the project proposal is likely to arouse significant public concern; and if so, why;
- Whether the project proposal is likely to cause significant adverse eco-systemic or socio-economic effects; and if so, why;
- Whether the project proposal is likely to cause significant adverse impacts on wildlife habitat or Inuit harvest activities; and if so, why;
- Whether the project proposal is of a type where the potential adverse effects are highly predictable and mitigable with known technology, (and providing any recommended mitigation measures); and
- Any matter of importance to the Party related to the project proposal.

Please note that *proposed* project-specific terms and conditions, should the project proceed, have been attached for consideration and comment ([Appendix A](#)).

CONTACT INFORMATION

Please send your comments to the NIRB via email at info@nirb.ca, via fax at (867) 983-2594 or via the individual project dashboard for this assessment on the NIRB's online public registry at www.nirb.ca/project/126224.

If you have any questions or require clarification, feel free to contact the undersigned at (867) 983-4607 or vnayak@nirb.ca.

Sincerely,



Varun Nayak
Monitoring Officer
Nunavut Impact Review Board

Attachments: Appendix A: *Proposed* Project Specific Terms and Conditions

Enclosures (6): Public Notice of Screening (English, French and Inuktitut)
Comment Forms (English, French and Inuktitut)

cc: Distribution List
Jared Ottenhof, Qikiqtani Inuit Association
Chris Spencer, Qikiqtani Inuit Association
Justin Buller, Government of Nunavut
Sean Joseph, Government of Nunavut
Mosha Cote, Nunavut Research Institute
Adrian Paradis, Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency
José Audet-Lecouffe, Fisheries and Oceans Canada

Appendix A: Proposed Project Specific Terms and Conditions

The following is a list of project-specific terms and conditions which, should the project proceed, may be recommended to be attached to any approval.

General

1. Fisheries and Oceans Canada (the Proponent) shall maintain a copy of the Project Terms and Conditions at the site of operation at all times and make it accessible to enforcement officers upon request.
2. The Proponent shall operate in accordance with all commitments stated in correspondence provided to the Nunavut Planning Commission (NPC File No.: 150867), and the NIRB (Online Application Form, August 18, 2025; Revised Application Form, August 27, 2025. This information should be accessible to enforcement officers upon request.
3. The Proponent shall operate the site in accordance with all applicable Acts, Regulations and Guidelines.
4. The Proponent shall ensure that it meets the standards and/or limits as set out in the authorizing agencies' permits or licences as required for this project.
5. The Proponent shall ensure that all personnel, staff and contractors are adequately trained prior to commencement of all project activities, and shall be made aware of all operational plans, management plans, guidelines and Proponent commitments relating to the project.

Water courses/Water bodies (including fresh and marine waters)

6. The Proponent shall not deposit, nor permit the deposit of any fuel, chemicals, wastes (including wastewater) or sediment into any water body. The Proponent should have in place an Emergency Spill Response Plan that is approved by the appropriate authorizing agency(ies).

Waste Management

7. The Proponent shall manage all hazardous and non-hazardous waste including food, domestic wastes, debris and petroleum-based chemicals (e.g., greases, gasoline, glycol-based antifreeze) in such a manner to avoid release into the environment and access to wildlife at all times until disposed of appropriately or at an approved facility.
8. The Proponent shall dispose of all wastes as required by the appropriate authorizing agencies if not removed to an approved facility for disposal.

Fuel and Chemical Storage

9. The Proponent shall ensure that re-fuelling of all equipment occurs in accordance with marine emission and air pollution standards (International Maritime Organization and International Maritime Dangerous Goods Code) and as required by the appropriate authorizing agencies.
10. The Proponent shall follow the authorizing agencies' direction for management and removal of hazardous materials and wastes (e.g., contaminated soils, sediment and waste oil).

11. The Proponent shall ensure that wildlife deterrent systems are utilized at the time of a spill incident in order to avoid wildlife (terrestrial or marine) and migratory birds from being contaminated.
12. The Proponent shall ensure that all spills of fuel or other deleterious materials of 100 litres or more must be reported immediately to the 24-hour Spill Line at (867) 920-8130.

Air Quality

13. The Proponent shall eliminate unnecessary idling to reduce greenhouse gas emissions as much as possible.

Wildlife – General

14. The Proponent shall not substantially alter or damage or destroy any wildlife habitat in conducting this operation unless otherwise authorized by the appropriate authorizing agencies.
15. The Proponent shall not chase, weary, harass or molest wildlife. This includes persistently circling, chasing, hovering over, pursuing or in any other way harass wildlife, or disturbing large groups of animals.
16. The Proponent shall not hunt or fish, unless proper Nunavut authorizations have been acquired.

Migratory Birds and Raptors Disturbance

17. The Proponent shall carry out all phases of the project in a manner that protects migratory birds and avoids harming, killing or disturbing migratory birds or destroying, disturbing or taking their nests or eggs. In this regard, the Proponent shall take into account Environment and Climate Change Canada's *Avoidance Guidelines*. The Proponent's actions in applying the *Avoidance Guidelines* shall be in compliance with the *Migratory Birds Convention Act, 1994* and with the *Species at Risk Act*.
18. The Proponent shall avoid the seaward site of seabird colonies and areas used by flocks of migrating waterfowl, a minimum distance away on the recommendation of the appropriate authorizing agencies.
19. The Proponent shall not pursue seabirds or waterbirds swimming on the water surface and shall avoid concentrations of these birds if encountered on the water.

Marine-Based Activities

20. The Proponent shall, where practicable, coordinate with other vessels to minimize simultaneous vessel traffic in critical wildlife habitat areas allowing the wildlife to continue to use the habitat undisturbed (e.g. Navy Board Inlet, Lancaster Sound, Milne Inlet, Bellot Strait).
21. The Proponent shall ensure that noise be kept to a minimum and shall refrain from making sharp or loud noises, blowing horns or whistles and shall maintain constant engine noise levels.
22. The Proponent shall not visit cliffs used by nesting and breeding birds during the late afternoon or early evening hours during the months of August and September.

23. The Proponent shall not attempt to intersect or interfere with the movements of marine mammals. This includes ensuring that there are no wake zones within 250 metres and a minimum of 100 metre no go zone around marine mammals. Strategic positioning of vessels ahead of the path being traveled by mobile mammals and waiting for the mammals to pass is also prohibited.
24. When marine mammals appear to be trapped or disturbed by vessel movements, the Proponent shall implement appropriate measures to mitigate disturbance, including stoppage of movement until wildlife have moved away from the immediate area.
25. The Proponent shall maintain a distance of 100 metres if a Polar Bear is encountered on land or ice while conducting activities from a zodiac or other small craft; all interaction with Polar Bears should be avoided if possible.
26. The Proponent shall maintain a distance of 500 metres of a walrus haul out while conducting activities from a zodiac or other small craft.
27. The Proponent shall suspend all project activities should any dead fish or wildlife (both marine and terrestrial), or any injured wildlife be observed during any works or activities in and around the marine waters. Activities may only be resumed on the recommendation of the authorizing agencies.
28. The Proponent shall report all incidents, injuries or sightings of marine mammals to the appropriate authorizing agencies.
29. The Proponent shall implement measures designed to minimize disturbance to seabed sediments and benthic communities and marine wildlife when carrying out project activities within the marine environment.

Other

30. The Proponent should engage with local residents regarding planned activities in the area and should solicit available Inuit Qaujimaningit and information regarding current recreational and traditional usage of the project area which may inform project activities. Posting of translated public notices and direct engagement with potentially interested groups and individuals prior to undertaking project activities is strongly encouraged.
31. The Proponent shall ensure that project activities do not interfere with Inuit wildlife harvesting or traditional land use activities.
32. The Proponent should, to the extent possible, hire local people and access local services where possible.