



**SCREENING DECISION REPORT
NIRB FILE No.: 26YN022**

NPC File No.: 151035

April 9, 2026

Following the Nunavut Impact Review Board’s (NIRB or Board) assessment of all materials provided, the NIRB is recommending that a review of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO)’s "ECWG Bowhead Whale Photo Identification and Biopsy Sampling” is not required pursuant to Article 12, Section 12.4.4(a) of the *Agreement between the Inuit of the Nunavut Settlement Area and Her Majesty the Queen in right of Canada (Nunavut Agreement)* and s. 92(1)(a) of the *Nunavut Planning and Project Assessment Act, S.C. 2013, c. 14, s. 2 (NuPPAA)*.

Subject to the Proponent’s compliance with the terms and conditions as set out in below, issued in accordance with s. 92(2)(a) of *NuPPAA*, the NIRB is of the view that the project proposal is not likely to cause significant public concerns, and it is unlikely to result in significant adverse environmental and social impacts. The NIRB therefore recommends that the responsible Minister accepts this Screening Decision Report.

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REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

The primary objectives of the NIRB are set out in Article 12, Section 12.2.5 of the *Nunavut Agreement* and are confirmed by s. 23 of the *NuPPAA*. The purpose of screening is provided for under Article 12, Section 12.4.1 of the *Nunavut Agreement* and s. 88 of the *NuPPAA*.

As set out under Article 12, Section 12.4.4 of the *Nunavut Agreement* and s. 92(1) of the *NuPPAA*, upon conclusion of the screening process, the Board must provide its written report the Minister indicating one of three options:

- (a) a review of the project is not required;
- (b) a review of the project is required; or
- (c) the project should be modified or abandoned.

PROJECT OVERVIEW & THE NIRB ASSESSMENT PROCESS

On February 12, 2026, the NIRB received a referral to screen Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO)'s " ECWG Bowhead Whale Photo Identification and Biopsy Sampling" project proposal (NIRB File No: 25YN040) from the Nunavut Planning Commission (Commission), with an accompanying positive conformity determination with the North Baffin Regional Land Use Plan. All documents received and pertaining to this project proposal can be accessed from the NIRB's Public Registry by using any of the following search criteria or www.nirb.ca/project/126349.

- Project Name: ECWG Bowhead Whale Photo Identification and Biopsy Sampling
- NIRB File No.: 26YN022
- NIRB Application No.: 126349

Table 1: NIRB's Assessment Process

Date	Stage
February 12, 2026	Receipt of project proposal and positive conformity determination (North Baffin Regional Land Use Plan) from the Commission
February 12, 2026	Pursuant to s. 144(1) of the <i>NuPPAA</i> the NIRB requested the Proponent complete an online application to address information required for Screening
February 19, 2026	Receipt of online application from Proponent
February 25, 2026	Scoping pursuant to s. 86(1) of the <i>NuPPAA</i>
March 3, 2026	Public engagement and comment request (which included terms and conditions) was issued to the following communities
March 24, 2026	Receipt of public comments
April 9, 2026	Issuance of Screening Decision Report

1. Project Scope

Location	Qikiqtani region, 100 kilometers Southeast of Clyde River
Objective	The Proponent intends to conduct research on bowhead whales within the Ninginganiq National Wildlife Area. The main objectives of this study are to collect biopsy samples that will be used for estimating population abundance, determining sex, studying diet, estimating age, and assessing pregnancy through hormone analyses. The Project also includes the use of small drones to collect photographic and video data for photo-identification studies, as well as the deployment of a hydrophone (SoundTrap) to record bowhead whale vocalizations during the field program.
Timeline	Operations: July 2026 to September 2026

As required under s. 86(1) of the *NuPPAA*, the Board accepted the scope of the project as set out by DFO in the proposal. The scope of the project proposal includes the following undertakings, works, or activities:

- Operation of two boats daily to transport personnel and equipment to research sites in the Ninginganiq National Wildlife Area
- Use of the existing camp location at Nuvuttiapik within the Ninginganiq National Wildlife Area
- Hiring of four locals through the Hunters and Trappers Association in Clyde River to support the researchers
- Use of two (2) drones to be used to take photos and videos of bowhead whales
- Up to four (4) crossbows to collect small skin/blubber tissue samples from bowhead whales
- Use of a hydrophone to record vocalizations (sounds) around Isabella Bay for approximately 2 weeks
- Up to approximately 100 bowhead whales may be sampled over a two-week period.
- Use of a generator to power small electronics at camp
- One (1) 12-gauge shotgun to be used for polar bear safety at camp.
- Use of approximately 2,640 liters of gasoline for the operation of boats and the generator
- Use of approximately 4 gallons of naphtha to operate camp stoves for meals
- Use of one liter of povidone iodine to clean stainless steel biopsy tips prior to sample collection
- Water would be brought from Clyde River community when needed
- Waste Management:
 - Greywater to be dispersed on the land at least 50 meters from camp and water sources
 - Non-combustible waste to be stored in garbage bags inside sealed plastic barrels to be packed out and disposed of at the Clyde River municipality dump
 - Used Betadine would be collected and transported back to the Freshwater Institute in Winnipeg and disposed of properly
 - Human waste would be stored in sealed bags, packed in a sealed barrel and disposed of at Clyde River facility

2. Inclusion or Exclusion to Scoping List

The NIRB has identified that the previously assessed activities listed above will be considered in the current assessment especially for potential of cumulative impacts where previous approvals may still be in force.

3. Public Comments and Concerns

As outlined in Table 1 above, notices regarding the NIRB's screening of this project proposal were distributed to community organizations as well as to relevant federal and territorial government agencies, Inuit organizations and other parties with a request for interested parties to provide the Board with any comments or concerns 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

On or before March 24, 2026, the NIRB received comments from the following interested parties:

Table 2: Comments Received

Commenting Party	NIRB Doc ID No.
Government of Nunavut	360162
Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada	360168
Transport Canada	360169

a. Summary of Comments and Concerns Received

The following provides a summary of the comments and concerns received by the NIRB in relation to the ECWG Bowhead Whale Photo Identification and Biopsy Sampling project proposal:

Government of Nunavut

- Noted that they have reviewed the proposed project and related documents and have no comments or concerns to raise with the Board at this time.

Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada

- Noted that they have reviewed the project proposal and have no comments to offer at this time.

Transport Canada

- Noted that the Proponent self-assessed under the Navigation Protection Program (NPP) Project Review Tool and determined that it qualifies under the Canadian Navigable Waters Act Minor Works Order. The Proponent does not require approval under the Canadian

Navigable Waters Act provided the requirements of the Minor Works Order are met during placement and operation of equipment.

ASSESSMENT OF THE PROJECT PROPOSAL IN ACCORDANCE WITH PART 3 OF *NUPPAA*

In determining whether a review of the project is required, the Board considered whether the project proposal had potential to result in significant ecosystemic or socio-economic impacts. Table 3. The Board took particular care to consider Inuit Qaujimaningit, Indigenous and Community Knowledge in carrying out its assessment and determination of the significance of impacts.

Table 3: Summary of the Board’s Assessment of Factors s. 90 *NuPPAA*

Factor	Comment
The size of the geographic area, including the size of wildlife habitats, likely to be affected by the impacts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The proposed project would occur within the Ninginganiq National Wildlife Area. The physical footprint of project activities is limited and confined to marine areas and an existing camp location at Nuvuttiapik. The proposed project would take place within habitats of far-ranging wildlife species such as migratory and non-migratory birds, and Species at Risk such as Polar Bears. ▪ Overall, the geographic area potentially affected by the Project is limited in extent, and while it overlaps with wildlife habitat, the spatial footprint of activities is small and localized.
The ecosystemic sensitivity of that area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Project is located within the Ninginganiq National Wildlife Area, which is recognized as important habitat for bowhead whales and other marine species. ▪ While no site-specific sensitive features were identified within the immediate footprint of activities, the area is considered ecologically sensitive due to its importance for feeding, resting, and socializing of bowhead whales.
The historical, cultural and archaeological significance of that area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No specific areas of historical, cultural and archaeological significance were identified by the Proponent within the physical footprint of the proposed project. However, the broader area has known cultural and historical significance, including past Inuit use and potential for archaeological resources.
The size of the human and the animal populations likely to be affected by the impacts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The proposed project is unlikely to result in impacts to local human and animal populations. While individual bowhead whales may be temporarily disturbed during sampling activities, no significant impacts to wildlife populations are anticipated.

Factor	Comment
The nature, magnitude and complexity of the impacts; the probability of the impacts occurring; the frequency and duration of the impacts; and the reversibility or irreversibility of the impacts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A zone of influence of up to 100 km from the most potentially-disruptive project activities was selected for the NIRB's assessment. ▪ The probability of impacts occurring is moderate, as interactions with bowhead whales are required to conduct sampling; however, disturbance events are expected to be brief and controlled. Impacts would occur intermittently over a two-week period during field activities. ▪ The duration of impacts is short-term and reversible, as whales have been observed to resume normal behaviour following sampling. No long-term or irreversible effects are anticipated. ▪ With adherence to the relevant regulatory requirements and application of the mitigation measures recommended by the NIRB, no significant residual effects are expected to occur.
The cumulative impacts that could result from the impacts of the project combined with those of any other project that has been carried out, is being carried out or is likely to be carried out.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Table 4 is a list of past, present and reasonably foreseeable projects. The Board recommended terms and conditions along with mitigation measures designed with consideration for the potential for cumulative effects in the Board Views section.
Any other factor that the Board considers relevant to the assessment of the significance of impacts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No other relevant factors were identified; however, see below for Regulatory Requirements mandating mitigation and/or reporting.

Regulatory Requirements

The Proponent is also advised that the following legislation may apply to the Project:

Acts and Regulations

1. The *Fisheries Act* (<http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/F-14/index.html>).
2. The *Nunavut Waters and Nunavut Surface Rights Tribunal Act* (<http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/n-28.8/>).
3. The *Migratory Birds Convention Act* (<http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/M-7.01/>), the *Migratory Birds Regulations* (https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/regulations/C.R.C.,_c._1035/index.html) and the *Migratory Bird Sanctuary Regulations* (https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/regulations/C.R.C.,_c._1036/index.html).
4. The *Species at Risk Act* (<https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/s-15.3/>). Attached in **Appendix A** is a list of Species at Risk in Nunavut.
5. The *Wildlife Act (Nunavut)* and its corresponding regulations (<http://www.canlii.org/en/nu/laws/stat/snu-2003-c-26/latest/snu-2003-c-26.html>).

6. The *Nunavut Act* (<http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/N-28.6/>). The Proponent must comply with the proposed terms and conditions listed in the attached **Appendix B**.
7. The *Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act* (<http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/A-12/>) and the *Arctic Shipping Safety and Pollution Prevention Regulations* (<https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/regulations/SOR-2017-286/index.html>).

Other Applicable Guidelines

8. The *Guidance Document for Passenger Vessels Operating in the Canadian Arctic* (<https://www.tc.gc.ca/eng/marinesafety/tp-tp13670-menu-2315.htm>).

Table 4: Past, Present, and Reasonably Foreseeable Projects Considered

NIRB Project Number	Project Title	Project Type
<i>Proposed Developments – undergoing assessment</i>		
26YN011	Hyperborea	Access
<i>Past Projects</i>		
25TN010	Roald Amundsen – Arctic Cruise 2025	Tourism

VIEWS OF THE BOARD

In considering the above factors, the Board has identified the following and respectfully provides its views regarding whether or not the proposed project has the potential to result in significant impacts. The NIRB has also proposed terms and conditions that would mitigate the potential adverse impacts identified.

Ecosystem, wildlife habitat and Inuit harvesting activities:

Valued Component	Migratory and non-migratory birds, terrestrial wildlife, and Species at Risk
Potential effects:	Potential adverse effects to migratory and non-migratory birds, and including their migratory routes and Species at Risk such as Polar Bears and Ivory Gull from noise and visual disturbance generated from the transportation of personnel and equipment via boat to the proposed research sites, research activities and the use of drones for photography and videography.
Nature of Impacts:	The potential for impacts is considered to be limited due to infrequent and temporary activities, and is limited due to infrequent activities within sensitive wildlife temporal periods. Project activities such boating or aerial photography (with the drone) could potentially disturb terrestrial wildlife and migratory birds with home range sizes near the marine environment; however, any resulting impacts would be expected to be reversible and temporary only.
Mitigating Factors:	The Proponent has proposed mitigation measures to minimize disturbance to wildlife, including limiting the duration and extent of activities and managing waste to avoid attracting wildlife. The Board is

	recommending terms and conditions which are expected to mitigate potential adverse impacts to terrestrial wildlife and migratory birds.
Proposed Terms and Conditions:	Waste Management – 7 and 8 Wildlife General – 15, 16, and 17 Migratory Birds and Raptors Disturbance – 18 through 21 Aircraft Flight Restrictions – 22, 23, and 24
Valued Component	Marine mammals and aquatic wildlife
Potential effects:	Potential adverse impacts to marine mammals and marine habitat (including fish and benthic populations) and key critical habitat (calving, post-calving areas, and migratory pathways) resulting from increased noise and/or physical disturbance associated with small watercraft operations and use of drones for the research activities. Cumulative effects on marine wildlife and marine habitat could occur if multiple vessels are encountered in the same area.
Nature of Impacts:	<p>Potential impacts are expected to be low in magnitude, localized, and temporary due to the short duration and limited scale of the Project within the Ninginganiq National Wildlife Area and surrounding marine environment near Clyde River.</p> <p>The probability of impacts occurring is moderate, as interactions with marine mammals are required for sampling; however, disturbance events are expected to be brief and controlled. Marine mammals, including bowhead whales, have been observed to resume normal behaviour shortly after sampling. Impacts are considered reversible and of low complexity.</p> <p>Potential cumulative effects may occur in the event of multiple vessels operating in the same area; however, such occurrences are expected to be infrequent.</p>
Mitigating Factors:	<p>The Proponent noted that the sampling collection methods are considered minimally invasive, but whales typically return to regular activities soon after the sampling event.</p> <p>The Board recommends that measures should be taken to avoid encounters with other vessels, where possible, to minimize adverse impacts to the marine wildlife, particularly in critical habitat, calving areas, and narrow migration corridors. Further, the Board is recommending terms and conditions to minimize and mitigate potential adverse impacts to marine wildlife and their habitat.</p>
Proposed Terms and Conditions:	Water courses/Water bodies (including fresh and marine waters) – 6 Waste Management – 7 Fuel and Chemical Storage – 9 through 13 Wildlife – General – 15, 16, and 17 Marine-Based Activities – 25 through 33

Valued Component	Air quality
Potential effects:	Potential adverse effects to air quality from emissions during the operations of the small vessels for research activities.
Nature of Impacts:	The potential for impacts is considered to be limited due to infrequent and temporary activities, and any resulting impacts would be expected to be reversible.
Mitigating Factors:	The Board is recommending terms and conditions to minimize potential impacts to air quality.
Proposed Terms and Conditions:	Air Quality – 14

Valued Component	Public and traditional land use activities
Potential effects:	Potential adverse impacts to the public and traditional land-use activities may result from proposed research activities as the Proponent is proposing to collect samples where bowheads would be aggregating.
Nature of Impacts:	Due to the proposed project's proximity to the community of Clyde River, there is the potential for adverse impacts to result from proposed project components overlapping with traditional marine use areas.
Mitigating Factors:	The Proponent proposes to follow through with their engagement with the local Hunters and Trappers Organization to avoid the timing of traditional land use activities on the island and offshore waters. Further, the Board is recommending terms and conditions to ensure project activities are informed by available Inuit Qaujimaningit and that project activities do not interfere with Inuit wildlife harvesting or traditional land use activities.
Proposed Terms and Conditions:	Waste Management – 7 Wildlife-General – 15 Marine-Based Activities – 25, 26, 29, 30, 32 and 33 Public Consultation – 35 Inuit Harvesting and Traditional Land Use – 36

Socio-economic effects on northerners:

Valued Component	Local employment, contracting and economic opportunities
Potential effects:	Potential positive impacts as the Proponent proposes to hire locally from the community of Clyde River through the local Hunters and Trappers Organizations. Further,
Nature of Impacts:	Positive economic benefits to Nunavut Beneficiaries hired through the Hunters and Trappers Organization but the benefits are short-term for the duration of the research activities.
Mitigating Factors:	The Proponent has indicated that local hiring will be prioritized where possible. The Board is recommending terms and conditions to ensure the Proponent continues to inform the community of the proposed research activities and findings, as well as provide community members with information to ensure a successful local hiring opportunity.

Proposed Terms and Conditions:	Public Consultation – 35 and 36 Local Hiring and Services – 37
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Significant public concern:

Valued Component	Public Concern
Potential effects:	No significant public concerns have been identified associated with this project proposal during the NIRB’s public comment period and in the proponent’s submission of engagement record as provided to date;
Nature of Impacts:	Each of the potential concerns were discussed in previous sections and the potential for impacts is considered to be minimal as long as the Proponent follow the recommended terms and conditions.
Mitigating Factors:	The Proponent engaged with the local Hunters and Trappers Organization in the planning phase of the proposed project. The Board is recommending terms and conditions to ensure that to the extent possible, the Proponent hire locally and access local services where possible, and to ensure planned activities in the area utilizes available Inuit Qaujimaningit.
Proposed Terms and Conditions:	Public Consultation – 35 Local Hiring and Access Local Services– 37

Technological innovations for which the effects are unknown:

- No specific issues have been identified associated with this project proposal.

Administrative Conditions:

To encourage compliance with applicable regulatory requirements and assist the Board and responsible authorities with compliance and effects monitoring for project activities, the following project-specific terms and conditions have been recommended: 1-5.

In considering the above factors and subject to the Proponent’s compliance with regulatory requirements and the terms and conditions necessary to mitigate against the potential adverse environmental and social effects, the Board is of the view that the proposed project is unlikely to cause significant public concern and its adverse ecosystemic and socioeconomic impacts are unlikely to be significant, or are highly predictable and can be adequately mitigated by known technologies.

RECOMMENDED PROJECT-SPECIFIC TERMS AND CONDITIONS

The Board is recommending the following specific terms and conditions to apply in respect of the project:

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.: 151035), and the NIRB (Online Application Form, February 19, 2026). 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 combustible wastes as required by the appropriate authorizing agencies. All non-combustible wastes from the project site shall be removed to an approved facility for disposal.

Fuel and Chemical Storage

9. The Proponent shall ensure that re-fuelling of all equipment occurs a minimum distance away from the high-water mark of any water body as required by the appropriate authorizing agencies.
10. The Proponent shall have a Spill Contingency Plan in place at all fuel storage or transfer locations and shall ensure that appropriate spill response equipment and clean-up materials (e.g., shovels, pumps, barrels, drip pans, and absorbents) are readily available.
11. 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).
12. 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.
13. 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

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

Wildlife – General

15. 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.
16. 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.
17. The Proponent shall not hunt or fish, unless proper Nunavut authorizations have been acquired.

Migratory Birds and Raptors Disturbance

18. 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*.
19. The Proponent shall not disturb or destroy the nests or eggs of any birds. If active nests of any birds are discovered or located (i.e., with eggs or young), the Proponent shall avoid these areas until nesting is complete and the young have naturally left the vicinity of the nest by establishing a protection buffer zone¹ appropriate for the species and the surrounding habitat.
20. 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.
21. 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.

Aircraft Flight Restrictions

22. The Proponent shall not alter flight paths to approach wildlife and avoid flying directly over animals.
23. The Proponent shall plan flight paths that minimize flights over known habitat likely to have birds or concentrations of wildlife. Aircraft should avoid critical and sensitive wildlife areas at all times by choosing alternate flight corridors.
24. The Proponent shall avoid known concentrations of birds (e.g., bird colonies, moulting areas) by a lateral distance of 1.5 kilometre. If avoidance is not possible maintain a minimum flight altitude of 1,100 metres (3,500 feet) over these areas.

¹ Recommended setback distances to define buffer zones have been established by Environment and Climate Change Canada for different bird groups nesting in tundra habitat and can be found at www.ec.gc.ca/paom-itmb.

Marine-Based Activities

25. 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).
26. 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.
27. 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.
28. 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.
29. 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.
30. The Proponent shall maintain a distance of 500 metres of a walrus haul out while conducting activities from a zodiac or other small craft.
31. 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.
32. The Proponent shall report all incidents, injuries or sightings of marine mammals to the appropriate authorizing agencies.
33. 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.

Heritage Sites

34. The Proponent shall ensure that all personnel are aware of the Proponent's responsibilities and requirements regarding archaeological or palaeontological sites that are encountered during land-based activities. This should include briefings explaining the prohibitions regarding removal of artifacts, and defacing or writing on rocks and infrastructure.

Other

35. 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.
36. The Proponent shall ensure that project activities do not interfere with Inuit wildlife harvesting or traditional land use activities.

37. The Proponent should, to the extent possible, hire local people and access local services where possible.

OTHER NIRB CONCERNS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In addition to the project-specific terms and conditions, the Board is recommending the following:

Change in Project Scope

1. Responsible authorities or Proponent shall notify the Nunavut Planning Commission as appropriate, and the NIRB of any changes in operating plans or conditions, including phase advancement, associated with this project prior to any such change.

Copy of licences, etc. to the Board and Commission

2. The NIRB respectfully requests that responsible authorities submit a copy of each licence, permit or other authorization issued for the Project to the NIRB to assist in enabling possible project monitoring that may be required. Please forward a copy of the licences, permits and/or other authorizations to the NIRB directly at info@nirb.ca or upload a copy to the NIRB's online registry at www.nirb.ca.

Use of Inuit Qaujimaningit

3. The Proponent is encouraged to work with local communities and knowledge holders to inform project design, to carry out the project, and to confirm or validate the perspectives represented in publications, and reports as part of the project. Care should be taken to ensure that Inuit Qaujimaningit and local knowledge collected for the project is used with permission and is accurately represented.

Bear and Carnivore Safety

4. The Proponent should review the Government of Nunavut's booklet on Bear Safety, which can be downloaded from this link: http://gov.nu.ca/sites/default/files/bear_safety_-_reducing_bear-people_conflicts_in_nunavut.pdf. Further information on bear/carnivore detection and deterrent techniques can be found in the "Safety in Grizzly and Black Bear Country" pamphlet, which can be downloaded from this link: https://www.enr.gov.nt.ca/sites/enr/files/resources/safety_in_grizzly_and_black_bear_country_english.pdf.
5. There are polar bear and grizzly bear safety resources available from the Bear Smart Society with videos on polar bear safety available in English, French and Inuktitut at <http://www.bearsmart.com/play/safety-in-polar-bear-country/>. Information can also be obtained from Parks Canada's website on bear safety at the following link: <http://www.pc.gc.ca/eng/pn-np/nu/quttinirpaaq/visit/visit6/d.aspx> or in reviewing the "Safety in Polar Bear Country" pamphlet, which can be downloaded from the following link: http://www.pc.gc.ca/eng/pn-np/nu/quttinirpaaq/visit/visit6/~/_media/pn-np/nu/auyuittuq/pdf/shared/PolarBearSafety_English.ashx.
6. Any problem wildlife or any interaction with carnivores should be reported immediately to the local Government of Nunavut, Department of Environment Conservation Office (Conservation Officer of Clyde River, phone: 867-924-6235).

Migratory Birds

7. The Proponent review Canadian Wildlife Services' "Key migratory bird terrestrial habitat sites in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut", available at the following link: <http://publications.gc.ca/site/eng/317630/publication.html> and "Key marine habitat sites for migratory birds in Nunavut and the Northwest Territories", available at the following link: <http://publications.gc.ca/site/eng/392824/publication.html>. The guide provides information to the Proponent on key terrestrial and marine habitat areas that are essential to the welfare of various migratory bird species in Canada.
8. For further information on how to protect migratory birds, their nests and eggs when planning or carrying out project activities, consult Environment and Climate Change Canada's Incidental Take web page and the fact sheet "Planning Ahead to Reduce the Risk of Detrimental Effects to Migratory Birds, and their Nests and Eggs" available at: http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2013/ec/CW66-324-2013-eng.pdf.

Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems, Unmanned Air Vehicles and Non-Recreational Drones

9. The Proponent should review Transport Canada's site on the rules for flying drones in Canada at <https://www.tc.gc.ca/en/services/aviation/drone-safety/new-rules-drones.html>.

CONCLUSION

The foregoing constitutes the Board's screening decision with respect to the screen Fisheries and Oceans Canada's "ECWG Bowhead Whale Photo Identification and Biopsy Sampling" The NIRB remains available for consultation with the Minister regarding this report as necessary.

Dated April 9, 2026 at Iqaluit, NU.



Albert Ehaloak, *Acting* Chairperson

Attachments: Appendix A: Species at Risk in Nunavut
Appendix B: Archaeological and Palaeontological Resources Terms and Conditions for Land Use Permit Holders

APPENDIX A: SPECIES AT RISK IN NUNAVUT

Due to the requirements of Section 79(2) of the *Species at Risk Act*, S.C. 2002, c. 29 (*SARA*), and the potential for project-specific adverse effects on listed wildlife species and its critical habitat, measures should be taken as appropriate to avoid or lessen those effects, and the effects need to be monitored. Project effects could include species disturbance, attraction to operations and destruction of habitat. This section applies to all species listed on Schedule 1 of *SARA*, as listed in the table below, or have been assessed by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC), which may be encountered in the project area. This list may not include all species identified as at risk by the Territorial Government. The following points provide clarification on the applicability of the species outlined in the table.

- Schedule 1 is the official legal list of Species at Risk for *SARA*. *SARA* applies to all species on Schedule 1. The term “listed” species refers to species on Schedule 1.
- Schedule 2 and 3 of *SARA* identify species that were designated at risk by the COSEWIC prior to October 1999 and must be reassessed using revised criteria before they can be considered for addition to Schedule 1.
- Some species identified at risk by COSEWIC are “pending” addition to Schedule 1 of *SARA*. These species are under consideration for addition to Schedule 1, subject to further consultation or assessment.

If species at risk are encountered or affected, the primary mitigation measure should be avoidance. The Proponent should avoid contact with or disturbance to each species, its habitat and/or its residence. All direct, indirect, and cumulative effects should be considered. Refer to species status reports and other information on the Species at Risk Registry at <http://www.sararegistry.gc.ca> for information on specific species.

Monitoring should be undertaken by the Proponent to determine the effectiveness of mitigation and/or identify where further mitigation is required. As a minimum, this monitoring should include recording the locations and dates of any observations of Species at Risk, behaviour or actions taken by the animals when project activities were encountered, and any actions taken by the proponent to avoid contact or disturbance to the species, its habitat, and/or its residence. This information should be submitted to the appropriate regulators and organizations with management responsibility for that species, as requested.

For species primarily managed by the Territorial Government, the Territorial Government should be consulted to identify other appropriate mitigation and/or monitoring measures to minimize effects to these species from the project.

Mitigation and monitoring measures must be undertaken in a way that is consistent with applicable recovery strategies and action/management plans.

Schedules of *SARA* are amended on a regular basis, so it is important to check the *SARA* registry (www.sararegistry.gc.ca) to get the current status of a species.

Updated: September 2024

Terrestrial Species at Risk²	COSEWIC Designation	Schedule of SARA	Government Organization with Primary Management Responsibility³
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	Special Concern	Schedule 1	Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC)
Common Nighthawk	Threatened	Schedule 1	ECCC
Eskimo Curlew	Endangered	Schedule 1	ECCC
Harlequin Duck	Special Concern	Schedule 1	ECCC
Harris's Sparrow	Special Concern	Schedule 1	ECCC
Horned Grebe	Special Concern	Schedule 1	ECCC
Ivory Gull	Endangered	Schedule 1	ECCC
Olive-sided Flycatcher	Threatened	Schedule 1	ECCC
Peregrine Falcon	Special Concern	Schedule 1	ECCC
Red Knot Islandica Subspecies	Special Concern	Schedule 1	ECCC
Red-necked Phalarope	Special Concern	Schedule 1	ECCC
Ross's Gull	Threatened	Schedule 1	ECCC
Rusty Blackbird	Special Concern	Schedule 1	ECCC
Short-eared Owl	Special Concern	Schedule 1	ECCC
Porsild's Bryum	Threatened	Schedule 1	Government of Nunavut (GN)
Transverse Lady Beetle	Special Concern	No Schedule	GN
Caribou (Dolphin and Union Population)	Endangered	Schedule 1	GN
Caribou (Barren-ground Population)	Threatened	No Schedule	GN
Caribou (Torngat Mountains Population)	Endangered	No Schedule	GN
Grizzly Bear (Western Population)	Special Concern	Schedule 1	ECCC
Peary Caribou	Endangered	Schedule 1	GN
Polar Bear	Special Concern	Schedule 1	ECCC
Wolverine	Special Concern	Schedule 1	GN
Atlantic Walrus (High Arctic Population)	Special Concern	No Schedule	Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO)
Atlantic Walrus (Central/Low Arctic Population)	Special Concern	No Schedule	DFO
Beluga Whale (Cumberland Sound Population)	Threatened	Schedule 1	DFO
Beluga Whale (Eastern Hudson Bay Population)	Endangered	No Schedule	DFO
Beluga Whale (Eastern High Arctic-Baffin Bay Population)	Special Concern	No Schedule	DFO
Beluga Whale (Western Hudson Bay Population)	Special Concern	No Schedule	DFO
Atlantic Cod (Arctic Lakes Population)	Special Concern	No Schedule	DFO
Fourhorn Sculpin (Freshwater Form)	Data Deficient	Schedule 3	DFO
Lumpfish	Threatened	No Schedule	DFO
Thorny Skate	Special Concern	No Schedule	DFO

² The Department of Fisheries and Oceans has responsibility for aquatic species.

³ Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) has a national role to play in the conservation and recovery of Species at Risk in Canada, as well as responsibility for management of birds described in the Migratory Birds Convention Act (MBCA). Day-to-day management of terrestrial species not covered in the MBCA is the responsibility of the Territorial Government. Populations that exist in National Parks are also managed under the authority of the Parks Canada Agency.

**APPENDIX B: ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND PALAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES TERMS AND
CONDITIONS FOR LAND USE PERMIT HOLDERS**



INTRODUCTION

The Department of Culture and Heritage (CH) routinely reviews land use applications sent to the Nunavut Water Board, Nunavut Impact Review Board and the Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada. These terms and conditions provide general direction to the permittee/proponent regarding the appropriate actions to be taken to ensure the permittee/proponent carries out its role in the protection of Nunavut’s archaeological and palaeontological resources.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

- 1) The permittee/proponent shall have a professional archaeologist and/or palaeontologist perform the following **Functions** associated with the **Types of Development** listed below or similar development activities:

	Types of Development (See Guidelines below)	Function (See Guidelines below)
a)	Large scale prospecting	Archaeological/Palaeontological Overview Assessment
b)	Diamond drilling for exploration or geotechnical purpose or planning of linear disturbances	Archaeological/Palaeontological Overview Assessment and/or Inventory and Documentation and/or Mitigation
c)	Construction of linear disturbances, Extractive disturbances, Impounding disturbances and other land disturbance activities	Archaeological/Palaeontological Overview Assessment and/or Inventory and Documentation and/or Mitigation

Note that the above-mentioned functions require either a Nunavut Archaeologist Permit or a Nunavut Palaeontologist Permit. CH is authorized by way of the *Nunavut and Archaeological and Palaeontological Site Regulations*⁴ to issue such permits.

⁴P.C. 2001-1111 14 June, 2001

- 2) The permittee/proponent shall not operate any vehicle over a known or suspected archaeological or palaeontological site.
- 3) The permittee/proponent shall not remove, disturb, or displace any archaeological artifact or site, or any fossil or palaeontological site.
- 4) The permittee/proponent shall immediately contact CH at (867) 934-2046 or (867) 975-5500 should an archaeological site or specimen, or a palaeontological site or fossil, be encountered or disturbed by any land use activity.
- 5) The permittee/proponent shall immediately cease any activity that disturbs an archaeological or palaeontological site encountered during the course of a land use operation until permitted to proceed with the authorization of CH.
- 6) The permittee/proponent shall follow the direction of CH in restoring disturbed archaeological or palaeontological sites to an acceptable condition. If these conditions are attached to either a Class A or B Permit under the Territorial Lands Act Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada directions will also be followed.
- 7) The permittee/proponent shall provide all information requested by CH concerning all archaeological sites or artifacts and all palaeontological sites and fossils encountered in the course of any land use activity.
- 8) The permittee/proponent shall make best efforts to ensure that all persons working under its authority are aware of these conditions concerning archaeological sites and artifacts and palaeontological sites and fossils.
- 9) If a list of recorded archaeological and/or palaeontological sites is provided to the permittee/proponent by CH as part of the review of the land use application the permittee/proponent shall avoid the archaeological and/or palaeontological sites listed.
- 10) Should a list of recorded sites be provided to the permittee/proponent, the information is provided solely for the purpose of the proponent's land use activities as described in the land use application, and must otherwise be treated confidentially by the proponent.

Legal Framework

As stated in Article 33 of the *Agreement between the Inuit of the Nunavut Settlement Area and Her Majesty the Queen in right of Canada (Nunavut Agreement)*:

Where an application is made for a land use permit in the Nunavut Settlement Area, and there are reasonable grounds to believe that there could be sites of archaeological importance on the lands affected, no land use permit shall be issued without written consent of the Designated Agency. Such consent shall not be unreasonably withheld. [33.5.12]

Each land use permit referred to in Section 33.5.12 shall specify the plans and methods of archeological site protection and restoration to be followed by the permit holder, and any other conditions the Designated Agency may deem fit. [33.5.13]

Palaeontology and Archaeology

Under the *Nunavut Act*⁵, the federal government can make regulations for the protection, care and preservation of palaeontological and archaeological sites and specimens in Nunavut. Under the *Nunavut Archaeological and Palaeontological Sites Regulations*⁶, it is illegal to alter or disturb any palaeontological or archaeological site in Nunavut unless permission is first granted through the permitting process.

Definitions

As defined in the *Nunavut Archaeological and Palaeontological Sites Regulations*, the following definitions apply:

“archaeological site” means a place where an archaeological artifact is found.

“archaeological artifact” means any tangible evidence of human activity that is more than 50 years old and in respect of which an unbroken chain of possession or regular pattern of usage cannot be demonstrated, and includes a Denesuline archaeological specimen referred to in section 40.4.9 of the Agreement between the Inuit of the Nunavut Settlement Area and Her Majesty the Queen in right of Canada (Nunavut Agreement).

“palaeontological site” means a site where a fossil is found.

“fossil” includes:

Fossil means the hardened or preserved remains or impression of previously living organisms or vegetation and includes:

- (a) natural casts;*
- (b) preserved tracks, coprolites and plant remains; and*
- (c) the preserved shells and exoskeletons of invertebrates and the preserved eggs, teeth and bones of vertebrates.*

Guidelines for Developers for the Protection of Archaeological Resources in the Nunavut Territory

(Note: Partial document only, complete document at: www.ch.gov.nu.ca/en/Archaeology.aspx)

Introduction

The following guidelines have been formulated to ensure that the impacts of proposed developments upon heritage resources are assessed and mitigated before ground surface altering activities occur. Heritage resources are defined as, but not limited to, archaeological and historical sites, burial grounds, palaeontological sites, historic buildings and cairns. Effective collaboration between the developer, the Department of Culture, and Heritage (CH), and the contract archaeologist(s) will ensure proper preservation of heritage resources in the Nunavut Territory. The roles of each are briefly described.

⁵ s. 51(1)

⁶ P.C. 2001-1111 14 June, 2001

CH is the Nunavut Government agency which oversees the protection and management of heritage resources in Nunavut, in partnership with land claim authorities, regulatory agencies, and the federal government. Its role in mitigating impacts of developments on heritage resources is as follows: to identify the need for an impact assessment and make recommendations to the appropriate regulatory agency; set the terms of reference for the study depending upon the scope of the development; suggest the names of qualified individuals prepared to undertake the study to the developer; issue an archaeologist or palaeontologist permit authorizing field work; assess the completeness of the study and its recommendations; and ensure that the developer complies with the recommendations.

The primary regulatory agencies that CH provides information and assistance to are the Nunavut Impact Review Board, for development activities proposed for Inuit Owned Lands (as defined in Section 1.1.1 of the *Agreement between the Inuit of the Nunavut Settlement Area and Her Majesty the Queen in right of Canada (Nunavut Agreement)*), and the Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, for development activities proposed for federal Crown Lands.

A developer is the initiator of a land use activity. It is the obligation of the developer to ensure that a qualified archaeologist or palaeontologist is hired to perform the required study and that provisions of the contract with the archaeologist or palaeontologist allow permit requirements to be met; i.e. fieldwork, collections management, artifact and specimen conservation, and report preparation. On the recommendation of the contract archaeologist or palaeontologist in the field and the Government of Nunavut, the developer shall implement avoidance or mitigative measures to protect heritage resources or to salvage the information they contain through excavation, analysis, and report writing. The developer assumes all costs associated with the study in its entirety.

Through his or her active participation and supervision of the study, the contract archaeologist or palaeontologist is accountable for the quality of work undertaken and the quality of the report produced. Facilities to conduct fieldwork, analysis, and report preparation should be available to this individual through institutional, agency, or company affiliations. Responsibility for the curation of objects recovered during field work while under study and for documents generated in the course of the study as well as remittance of artifacts, specimens and documents to the repository specified on the permit accrue to the contract archaeologist or palaeontologist. This individual is also bound by the legal requirements of the *Nunavut Archaeological and Palaeontological Sites Regulations*.

Types of Development

In general, those developments that cause concern for the safety of heritage resources will include one or more of the following kinds of surface disturbances. These categories, in combination, are comprehensive of the major kinds of developments commonly proposed in Nunavut. For any single development proposal, several kinds of these disturbances may be involved

- *Linear disturbances: including the construction of highways, roads, winter roads, transmission lines, and pipelines;*
- *Extractive disturbances: including mining, gravel removal, quarrying, and land filling;*

- *Impoundment disturbances: including dams, reservoirs, and tailings ponds;*
- *Intensive land use disturbances: including industrial, residential, commercial, recreational, and land reclamation work, and use of heritage resources as tourist developments.*
- *Mineral, oil and gas exploration: establishment of camps, temporary airstrips, access routes, well sites, or quarries all have potential for impacting heritage resources.*

Types of Studies Undertaken to Preserve Heritage Resources

Overview: An overview study of heritage resources should be conducted at the same time as the development project is being designed or its feasibility addressed. They usually lack specificity with regard to the exact location(s) and form(s) of impact and involve limited, if any, field surveys. Their main aim is to accumulate, evaluate, and synthesize the existing knowledge of the heritage of the known area of impact. The overview study provides managers with baseline data from which recommendations for future research and forecasts of potential impacts can be made. A Class I Permit is required for this type of study if field surveys are undertaken.

Reconnaissance: This is done to provide a judgmental appraisal of a region sufficient to provide the developer, the consultant, and government managers with recommendations for further development planning. This study may be implemented as a preliminary step to inventory and assessment investigations except in cases where a reconnaissance may indicate a very low or negligible heritage resource potential. Alternately, in the case of small-scale or linear developments, an inventory study may be recommended and obviate the need for a reconnaissance.

The main goal of a reconnaissance study is to provide baseline data for the verification of the presence of potential heritage resources, the determination of impacts to these resources, the generation of terms of reference for further studies and, if required, the advancement of preliminary mitigative and compensatory plans. The results of reconnaissance studies are primarily useful for the selection of alternatives and secondarily as a means of identifying impacts that must be mitigated after the final siting and design of the development project. Depending on the scope of the study, a Class 1 or Class 2 Permit is required for this type of investigation.

Inventory: A resource inventory is generally conducted at that stage in a project's development at which the geographical area(s) likely to sustain direct, indirect, and perceived impacts can be well defined. This requires systematic and intensive fieldwork to ascertain the effects of all possible and alternate construction components on heritage resources. All heritage sites must be recorded on Government of Nunavut Site Survey forms. Sufficient information must be amassed from field, library and archival components of the study to generate a predictive model of the heritage resource base that will:

- allow the identification of research and conservation opportunities;
- enable the developer to make planning decisions and recognize their likely effects on the known or predicted resources; and

- make the developer aware of the expenditures, which may be required for subsequent studies and mitigation. A Class 1 or 2 permit is required.

Assessment: At this stage, sufficient information concerning the numbers and locations of heritage resources will be available, as well as data to predict the forms and magnitude of impacts. Assessments provide information on the size, volume, complexity and content of a heritage resource, which is used to rank the values of different sites or site types given current archaeological knowledge. As this information will shape subsequent mitigation program(s), great care is necessary during this phase.

Mitigation: This refers to the amelioration of adverse impacts to heritage resources and involves the avoidance of impact through the redesign or relocation of a development or its components; the protection of the resource by constructing physical facilities; or, the scientific investigation and recovery of information from the resource by excavation or other method. The type(s) of appropriate mitigative measures are dictated by their viability in the context of the development project. Mitigation strategies must be developed in consultation with, and approved by, the Department of Culture and Heritage. It is important to note that mitigation activities should be initiated as far in advance of the construction of the development as possible.

Surveillance and monitoring: These may be required as part of the mitigation program.

Surveillance may be conducted during the construction phase of a project to ensure that the developer has complied with the recommendations.

Monitoring involves identification and inspection of residual and long-term impacts of a development (i.e. shoreline stability of a reservoir); or the use of impacts to disclose the presence of heritage resources, for example, the uncovering of buried sites during the construction of a pipeline.