

12 May 2020

Mia Otokiak
Junior Technical Advisor
Nunavut Impact Review Board
P.O. Box 1360
Cambridge Bay, NU, X0B 0C0
Via NIRB public registry

Re: NIRB 125513/20YN008: Comments Received for GN's "Re-estimating the Abundance of the Lancaster Sound Polar Bear Subpopulation via Genetic Mark-recapture Sampling"

Dear Mia Otokiak,

On April 16, 2020 the Nunavut Impact Review Board (NIRB) invited parties to comment on the Government of Nunavut's "Re-estimating the abundance of the Lancaster Sound (LS) Polar Bear Subpopulation via Genetic Mark-recapture Sampling" Project Proposal. On 11 May 2020 I received a notice via email that Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (CIRNAC) and a community member from Arctic Bay provided comments. We appreciate the comments from both parties. We believe that the comments from CIRNAC are directed towards us while the comments from the Arctic Bay community member address the NIRB. Thus this letter addresses the comments received from CIRNAC.

A. *Whether the Project is of a type where the potential adverse effects are highly predictable and mitigable with known technology, (please provide any recommended mitigation measures);*

- Our proposal outlines that existing camps will be utilized if need be, e.g., Fort Ross camp, Polar Bear Pass cabin, and existing outpost camps. Camps will not be erected on lakes or streams because it is not safe and has never been our practice during research. None of our equipment will be stored on surface lake or stream ice.
- All fuel is stored in standard fuel drums that prevent access to wildlife. If any other chemicals or fuels are used at camps they are stored in structures at those camps to prevent any access by wildlife.
- We will provide secondary containment/surface liner to all cache locations although these have their own issues since they fill up with snow and ice over time, are slippery and become hazardous to personnel when handling drums, and at times become damaged by wildlife.
- All fuel and hazardous materials are stored >31m away from the high water mark of any water body. This has always been our standard procedure.
- All re-fuelling will occur >31m away from any high water mark of any waterbody given that all drums are stored >31m away from the high watermark of any waterbody.

- There will be an emergency spill kit in the Twin Otter during transporting and caching fuel to prevent any spills, should they occur. The full fuel drums will be stored in containment liners. The fuel drums will be sitting in those caches until we use fuel several months later. During our field research activities we will have emergency spill supplies in the helicopter to deal with any spills should they occur. In addition, major spill kits are also available in Resolute at PCSP and in Grise Fiord at the Conservation Office.

B. *Any matter of importance to the Party related to the project proposal;*

Identification of Environmental Impacts Table

The rationale to not include any potential impacts on Water quality, Hydrology/Limnology and Sediment and soil quality was based on our experience that we have with spring fuel caching and the parties that are involved that have put safety and proper drum storage as a very high priority, especially as it relates to potential spills. However, we recognize that there is a potential for a spill. The impacts on soil and hydrology are limited because the drums will be stored >31m away from any water source and the high water mark of any water body, and the fuel drums are situated in a secondary spill containment. We concluded that the potential impact on soil, hydrology and sediment are therefore very limited.

The use of heavy tarp and additional mitigation measures has been addressed above.

Communication with Land Users

Our proposal indicates that we already had planned consultations with all affected communities, but because of the COVID-19 pandemic the planned meetings have been suspended for the time being. We have communicated with the communities and informed them that we are seeking to communicate the intent of our research work to them.

Full consultation with Hunter's and Trapper's Organizations (HTOs) of affected communities is a standard approach we take in all territorial research projects. During initial project consultations we provide an overview of the project and research plans, discuss methodology, and seek consensus on the methods. Moreover, we include local knowledge in project design and invite local HTO-selected individuals to participate in field activities to have employment and training opportunities and for accountability purposes. Once field seasons are completed, we provide updated information to all co-management partners. When a project is completed, we provide final results in writing and through in-community consultation meetings.

On another note, I am not sure how to respond to the comments by Hannah Ijjangiaq from Arctic Bay aside that we will communicate with the HTO and conduct consultations as outlined above.

We trust that these comments address the concerns brought forward by CIRNAC. If there are any other questions please do not hesitate to contact me at my email mdyck1@gov.nu.ca.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'M. Dyck', written over a horizontal line.

M. Dyck, Polar Bear Biologist II