



NIRB File No.: 22YN021
NPC File No.: 149746

April 27, 2022

Cortney Wheeler
Fisheries and Oceans Canada
501 University Crescent
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3T 2N6

Sent via email: Cortney.watt@dfo-mpo.gc.ca

Re: Notice of Screening for DFO's "Passive Acoustic Monitoring and UAV Assessment of the Impacts of Shipping and Development on High Arctic Beluga Whales and Narwhals" Project Proposal

Dear Cortney Wheeler:

On April 11, 2022, the Nunavut Impact Review Board (NIRB) received a referral to screen Fisheries and Oceans Canada's (DFO) "Passive Acoustic Monitoring and UAV Assessment of the Impacts of Shipping and Development on High Arctic Beluga Whales and Narwhals" project proposal from the Nunavut Planning Commission (Commission), with an accompanying positive conformity determination with the North Baffin Regional Land Use Plan.

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 **22YN021**.

INFORMATION REQUEST

On April 12, 2022, the NIRB requested that the Proponent complete the online application form through the NIRB's public registry system and ensure, pursuant to s. 144(1) of the *NuPPAA*, that sufficient information is provided to determine the scope of the project activities being proposed and commence screening.

On April 20, 2022, the NIRB received the required information and commenced the screening pursuant to Part 3 of the *NuPPAA*.

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/125688.

Project:	Passive Acoustic Monitoring and UAV Assessment of the Impacts of Shipping and Development on High Arctic Beluga Whales and Narwhals				
Region:	Qikiqtani (North Baffin)				
Location:	Creswell Bay				
Closest Community:	Resolute Bay	Distance (approximate)	218 kilometres (km)	Direction	North
Summary of Project Description:	The Proponent intends to use drone video and photographs to look at the body size of whales, measure ship noise and beluga and narwhal vocalizations, observe beluga and narwhal behaviour in the presence and absence of vessels, assess interactions between narwhal and beluga, and collect biopsy samples to look at hormone levels and genetics in the whales.				
Project Proposed Timeline:	July to August, 2022				

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

- Twin Otter used for pick up and drop off of equipment and personnel;
- Set up and use of six (6) person temporary camp;
- Use of two (2) zodiacs to collect tissue samples, deploy hydrophones, and to operate drones for video and imagery;
- Use of two (2) drones to take videos of whales;
 - Will be flown a minimum of 20m over the surface of the water.
- Use of a CO2 air rifle to collect tissue samples from whales;
- Deployment of two (2) hydrophones to study whale vocalization;
- Deployment of underwater camera to record behaviours of whales;
- Storage and use of fuel for zodiacs;
- Sourcing of water at the Creswell River near camp;
- Sewage Waste to be buried on land; and
- All non-combustible waste to be brought to Polar Continental Shelf Program camp for proper disposal.

Inclusion or Exclusion of Scoping List

At this time, the NIRB has identified no additional works 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 www.nirb.ca/project/125688 and include:

- *Commission Conformity Determination*
- *Commission Application and Questionnaire*
- *NIRB's Online Application*
- *DFO Tagging and Biopsy Protocol*

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's project proposal with this letter, and we invite interested parties to comment directly to the NIRB by **May 18, 2022**.

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.

Additionally, please be aware that the NIRB and the Nunavut Water Board (NWB) are required to coordinate their processes¹ for projects that require a water licence, especially municipal undertakings in order ensure the timely review and processing of the application. In undertaking a coordinated NIRB-NWB process, the Proponent must provide information through the assessment to satisfy both the impact assessment requirements as well as the water licensing process; furthermore, where information to satisfy each process is similar, coordination of the timing or contents of applications may be considered when information is being submitted to both organizations. However, the Proponent has the option to request or opt out of a coordinated process at any time. Should the Proponent wish to discontinue the coordinated process, the Proponent may do so in writing to both the NIRB and the NWB.

¹ As per Sections 13.5.2 and 13.6.1 of the *Nunavut Agreement*, s. 193 of *NuPPAA*, and s. 37 of the *Nunavut Waters and Nunavut Surface Rights Tribunal Act*.

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/125688.

If you have any questions or require clarification, feel free to contact the undersigned at (867) 983-4622 or motokiak@nirb.ca.

Sincerely,



Mia Otokiak
Junior Technical Advisor
Nunavut Impact Review Board

Enclosures (4): Public Notice of Screening (English, and Inuktitut)
Comment Forms (English, and Inuktitut)

cc: Distribution List
Richard Dwyer, Nunavut Water Board
Carson Gillis, Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated
Stephen Williamson-Bathory, Qikiqtani Inuit Association
Joel Fortier, Qikiqtani Inuit Association
Jared Ottenhof, Qikiqtani Inuit Association
Geoff Clark, Kitikmeot Inuit Association
Wynter Kuliktana, Kitikmeot Inuit Association
Michele LeBlanc-Harvard, Government of Nunavut – Department of Environment
Agnes Simonfalvy, Government of Nunavut – Department of Economic Development and Transportation
Mosha Cote, Nunavut Research Institute
Lisa Pirie-Dominix, Canadian Wildlife Services
Alasdair Beattie, Fisheries and Oceans Canada
Hamlet of Resolute Bay
Hamlet of Pond Inlet
Hamlet of Arctic Bay
Hamlet of Kugaaruk
Hamlet of Taloyoak
Hamlet of Gjoa Haven
Resolute Bay Hunters' and Trappers Organization
Pond Inlet Hunters' and Trappers Organization
Arctic Bay Hunters' and Trappers Organization
Kugaaruk Hunters' and Trappers Organization
Taloyoak Hunters' and Trappers Organization
Gjoa Haven Hunters' and Trappers Organization