

Environmental Protection Operations Directorate
Prairie & Northern Region
5019 52nd Street, 4th Floor
P.O. Box 2310
Yellowknife, NT X1A 2P7

ECCC File: 6500 000 277/001
NIRB File: 23YN020



May 16, 2023

via email at: info@nirb.ca

Francis Emingak
Manager, Technical Administration
Nunavut Impact Review Board
29 Mitik Street
P.O. Box 1360
Cambridge Bay, NU X0B 0C0

Dear Francis Emingak:

RE: 23YN020 – Fisheries and Oceans Canada – High Arctic Cetacean Survey 2023 – Scientific Research Application

Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) has reviewed the information submitted to the Nunavut Impact Review Board (NIRB) regarding the above-mentioned research plan.

ECCC provides expert information and knowledge to project assessments on subjects within the department's mandate, including climate change, air quality, water quality, biodiversity, environmental preparedness and emergencies. This work includes reviewing proponent characterization of environmental effects and mitigation measures, and providing advice to decision makers on activities needed to mitigate these environmental effects. Any comments received from ECCC in this context does not relieve the proponent of its obligations to respect all applicable federal legislation.

The following comment is provided:

1. Migratory Birds

Reference(s)

- NIRB Application for Screening #125793

Comment

The application, as provided to NIRB, does not appear to contain a detailed map showing the intended survey locations or transects to be flown within the project area. However, utilizing the map of the project area provided on page 11 of the application, it appears as though the activity



will overlap with multiple National Wildlife Areas (NWAs), Migratory Bird Sanctuaries (MBSs), Important Bird Areas, and Key Marine and Terrestrial areas for birds.

The Project is scheduled to occur over the general nesting season for migratory birds. As large concentrations of migratory birds and avian species at risk may be found staging and nesting in these areas during this time, low altitude flights may have adverse impacts on these species.

ECCC Recommendation(s)

In order to reduce aircraft disturbance to migratory birds and subject to pilot discretion regarding safety, ECCC recommends:

- a) Avoiding known concentrations of birds (e.g. important bird areas, MBSs, NWAs, moulting areas) by a lateral distance of at least 1.5 kilometres.
- b) Avoiding the seaward side of seabird colonies and areas used by flocks of coastal migrating waterfowl by 3 kilometres.
- c) Avoiding excessive hovering or circling over areas of high bird concentrations.
- d) If avoidance is not possible, maintaining a minimum flight altitude of 1,100 metres (3,500 feet) over these areas.
- e) Informing pilots of these recommendations and of areas of high bird concentrations.

ECCC may be able to provide a map of known concentrations of birds that may be found along the Proponents intended flight routes to better inform their mitigation approach. The Proponent is encouraged to contact ECCC for further information.

If you need more information, please contact Anna Graham at Anna.Graham@ec.gc.ca.

Sincerely,

[original signed by]

Anna Graham
Environmental Assessment Officer

cc: Melissa Pinto, Acting Head, Environmental Assessment North (NT and NU)