Kivalliq Inuit Association
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Chesterfield Inlet

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Whale Cove

Technical memo - NIRB 125880/24UN004 Screening and Comment Request

Jeff W. Higdon, 15 February 2024

File being reviewed: NIRB 125880/24UN004, Alex Fredin's "Waterfowl Egg Collection for Education" Project Proposal

Review for: Kivalliq Inuit Association Lands Department

KIA request: review and comment on NIRB screening request and project proposal

Introduction

The Nunavut Impact Review Board (NIRB) is screening file no. 24UN004 and seeking comment from interested parties. The file is Alex Fredin's "Waterfowl Egg Collection for Education" Project Proposal, and comments are requested by 19 February 2024.

NIRB seeks 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; if so, why;
- Whether the project proposal is of a type where the potential adverse effects are highly predictable and mitigable with known technology (please provide any recommended mitigation measures); and
- Any matter of importance to the Party related to the project proposal.

Answers to all of these questions are provided below, after a brief summary of the project activities.

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Summary of Project Proposal

The Project has two proponents, Alex Fredin (Arlington, MN, USA) and Maynard Axelson (Mount Vernon, WA, USA). Both proponents are waterfowl aviculturists (people who practice the keeping and breeding of birds) who provide public awareness and education on waterfowl, including through the hosting of biology clubs and students to their facilities. Both proponents are members of local, national, and international waterfowl conservation organizations, including the International Wild Waterfowl Association.

The proponents are proposing to collect up to 25 eggs each from the following species: Common Eider (*Somateria mollissima*), King Eider (*Somateria spectabilis*), Red Breasted Merganser (*Mergus serrator*), Long-tailed Ducks (*Clangula hyemalis*) and Brant Goose (Atlantic) (*Branta bernicla hrota*). The application notes that they may not fulfil those quantities, but the number was chosen to provide a better chance for success for both proponent's facilities. The 5 species were chosen because there are not many currently in captivity, which limits opportunities to promote their conservation and educate others. After collection, eggs will be transported back to Coral Harbour (where the proponents will stay) and be placed in incubators to for eventual transportation back to the USA. Eggs will be incubated and hatched at the US facilities, and the ducklings/goslings reared in controlled environments. The proponents plan to hire local Inuit with the guidance of the Aiviit HTO.

The Nunavut Planning Commission (NPC) has determined that the project proposal conforms to the Keewatin Regional Land Use Plan (KRLUP). The Aiviit Hunter's and Trapper's Organization (HTO) in Coral Harbour has also provided a Letter of Support for this egg collection project. A number of permits are needed for this project. Upon receiving a positive decision from NPC and NIRB, the proponents will apply for permits from the Government of Nunavut Department of Environment and Wildlife and Environment and Climate Change Canada, Canadian Wildlife Services. The proponents will also require import permits from relevant US authorities such as the US Department of Agriculture and US Fish and Wildlife Service.

Response to NIRB

1) Whether the project proposal is likely to arouse significant public concern; and if so, why.

Some residents of Coral Harbour may express concern over the collection of eggs from waterfowl species that are culturally and socioeconomically important to Inuit. The proposed number of eggs to

be collected is not biologically significant however, and Aiviit Hunter's and Trapper's Organization support may alleviate any local concerns.

2) *Whether the project proposal is likely to cause significant adverse eco-systemic or socio-economic effects; and if so, why.*

The 5 waterfowl species involved in this proposal are consumed by local Inuit, including their eggs. The numbers proposed (maximum 25 eggs per species) are unlikely to cause significant adverse eco-systemic or socio-economic effects, given the abundance of nests on Southampton Island. The Aiviit HTO has supported the proposal at the requested numbers, but may be able to provide the proponents with additional guidance, for example, reducing the number of eggs to be collected from species that are less abundant.

3) *Whether the project proposal is likely to cause significant adverse impacts on wildlife habitat or Inuit harvest activities; if so, why.*

The proposal is not expected to cause significant adverse impacts on wildlife habitats. Any potential for significant adverse impacts on Inuit harvest activities can be alleviated by closely working with the Aiviit HTO to ensure that collecting activities occur in areas where Inuit are not actively harvesting eggs for subsistence.

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

The proponents have the experience and knowledge necessary to minimize adverse effects by ensuring that eggs are collected in a safe manner and kept healthy through the use of incubators.

5) *Any matter of importance to the Party related to the project proposal.*

Local support and participation are critical to the success of this project. The proponents plan to work with the Aiviit HTO to hire local guides. A minimum of two local guides should be hired. Local guides will also be required for polar bear safety reasons, and the proponents should consult with the Aiviit HTO on bear safety plans.

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The NIRB application notes that the proponents will not remove more than 2 eggs from a nest. Inuit have well-established guidelines for sustainability when it comes to egg collection, and the proponents should work closely with the Aiviit HTO to develop a protocol that specifies how many eggs can be removed for each nest depending on the total number of eggs present (e.g., remove a single egg from nests with 3 or less eggs, and a maximum of 2 eggs from nests with 4 or more eggs). The proponents are also encouraged to work with the Aiviit HTO to ensure they are not collecting eggs from nests where local Inuit are also harvesting, to mitigate any cumulative impacts from multiple egg collections from the same nests.

The proponents have not consulted with the Nunavut Research Institute (NRI) as they consider the project to be educational and not research. The NRI administers Nunavut's Scientists Act which applies only to research in the social, health, land or physical/natural research disciplines, and it does not license wildlife research. The proponents will however require a wildlife research permit issued by the Nunavut Department of Environment, under the Nunavut Wildlife Act. The proponents will also require a Scientific Educational permit from Environment and Climate Change Canada, and possibly an aviculture permit. They are encouraged to apply for these permits as soon as possible. The NPC questionnaire submitted by the proponents states that the project will not be located within the McConnell River Migratory Bird Sanctuary (MBS), the Harry Gibbons MBS or the East Bay MBS, and will instead take place within municipal boundaries, in whole or in part. Should these plans change, additional permits to access the MBS may be required.