



SCREENING DECISION REPORT NIRB FILE No.:25YN024

NPC File No.: 150413

July 15, 2025

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's "Biopsy, tagging, acoustics, and drone work on walrus and beluga" 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(s) 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 April 7, 2025, the NIRB received a referral to screen Fisheries and Oceans Canada’s “Biopsy, tagging, acoustics, and drone work on walrus and beluga” project proposal (NIRB File No: 25YN024) from the Nunavut Planning Commission (Commission), with an accompanying positive conformity determination with the Keewatin 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/126169.

- Project Name: Biopsy, tagging, acoustics, and drone work on walrus and beluga
- NIRB File No.: 25YN024
- NIRB Application No.: 126169

Table 1: NIRB’s Assessment Process

Date	Stage
April 7, 2025	Receipt of project proposal and positive conformity determination (Keewatin Regional Land Use Plan) and referral from the Commission.
April 9, 2024	Pursuant to s. 144(1) of the <i>NuPPAA</i> requested the proponent complete an online application on the NIRB’s Public Registry
April 14, 2025	Receipt of online application from Proponent
April 14, 2025	Scoping pursuant to s. 86(1) of the <i>NuPPAA</i>
May 13, 2025	Public engagement and comment request (which included proposed terms and conditions) was issued in English and translations were issued later to the following communities: Coral Harbour, Igloolik, Kinngait, Naujaat, and Sanirajak.
June 3, 2025	Receipt of public comments
June 20, 2025	Pursuant to Article 12 s 12.4.5 of the <i>Nunavut Agreement</i> and s. 92(3) of the <i>NuPPAA</i> , an extension to the 45-day timeline for the provision of the Board’s Report was requested from the Minister of Fisheries
July 15, 2025	Issuance of Screening Decision Report

1. Project Scope

Location	Kivalliq and Qikiqtani region, Coral Harbour, Igloolik, Kinngait, Naujaat, and Sanirajak.
Objective	The Proponent intends to conduct research on walrus and beluga whales to determine how they might be affected by increased shipping in the Qikiqtani and Kivalliq regions.
Timeline	July to October 2025

As required under ss. 86(1) of the *NuPPAA*, the Board accepts the scope of the project as set out by Fisheries and Oceans Canada in the proposal. The scope of the project proposal includes the following undertakings, works, or activities:

- Daily trips by boat to the survey sites in and around Coral Harbour, Igloolik, Kinngait, Naujaat, and Sanirajak to survey and place equipment while avoiding protected areas or National Parks;
- Collect biopsy samples of walrus and beluga to study the genetics of the species;
- Equip some walruses and belugas with satellite tags to determine the location and depth of where the species roam;
- Use drones and remote cameras to conduct aerial surveys and to monitor walrus haul outs and gather behavioral data on beluga whales;
- Place hydrophones to monitor marine mammal presence;
- Local support from the local Hunters and Trappers Associations/Organizations to hire boats, captains and field research assistants;
- Use of community accommodations and fuel; and,
- Analyze the data at a laboratory facility.

2. Inclusion or Exclusion to Scoping List

The NIRB has identified no additional works or activities in relation to the project proposal. As a result, the NIRB proceeded with screening the project based on the scope as described above.

3. Public Comments and Concerns

Notices regarding the NIRB's screening of this project proposal were distributed to community organizations (Table 1) as well as to relevant federal and territorial government agencies, Inuit organizations and other parties requesting interested parties 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.

Additionally, proposed project-specific terms and conditions, should the project proceed, were attached for consideration and comment.

On or before June 3, 2025, the NIRB received comments from the following interested parties:

Table 2: Comments Received

Commenting Party	NIRB Doc ID No.
Government of Nunavut	355660
Transport Canada	355880
Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada	355298

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 “Biopsy, tagging, acoustics, and drone work on walrus and beluga” project proposal:

- **Government of Nunavut:** no comment
- **Transport Canada:** no concerns on the proposed project but offers regulatory comments
 - the project is subject to the *Canadian Navigable Waters Act* as the project, specifically the employment of hydrophones, will be undertaken in areas that is a scheduled navigable waterway;
 - an approval under the *Canadian Navigable Waters Act* is not required provided compliance with the Minor Works Order.
- **Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada:** no comment

b. Comments and Concerns with respect to Inuit Qaujimaningit, Indigenous and Community Knowledge

No concerns or comments were received with respect to Inuit Qaujimaningit, Indigenous and Community knowledge in relation to the proposed project. However, Inuit Qaujimaningit and Indigenous and community knowledge is incorporated into the terms and conditions recommended below based on information collected from prior and similar projects, data collected and mapped by the Commission, and other available sources.

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 physical footprint of the proposed project is approximately 50 square kilometres, defined by a 5 km radius surrounding the five research sites

Factor	Comment
	<p>on the sea, including where cameras and hydrophones are deployed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposed project would take place within habitats of far-ranging marine wildlife species such as walrus and beluga whales, bowhead whales, killer whales, narwhal, ringed seal, harp seal, and Arctic char and marine birds.
The ecosystemic sensitivity of that area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No specific areas of ecosystemic sensitivity have been identified by the Proponent within the physical footprint of the proposed project.
The historical, cultural and archaeological significance of that area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No specific areas of historical, cultural and archaeological significance have been identified by the Proponent within the physical footprint of the proposed project.
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 significant adverse impacts to local human and walrus and beluga whale populations.
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 5 km from the most potentially-disruptive project activities was selected for the NIRB's assessment. 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

- *The Fisheries Act* (<http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/F-14/index.html>)
- *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)

- The Migratory Bird Sanctuary Regulations (<https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/regulations/C.R.C., c. 1036/index.html>)
- The Species at Risk Act (<https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/s-15.3/>)
- 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>)
- The Nunavut Act (<http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/N-28.6/>)
- The Transportation of Dangerous Goods Act (<http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/t-19.01/>)
- The Transportation of Dangerous Goods Regulations (<http://www.tc.gc.ca/eng/tdg/clear-tofc-211.htm>)
- The Aeronautics Act (<http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/A-2/>)
- The Canadian Aviation Regulations (<https://www.tc.gc.ca/eng/acts-regulations/regulations-sor96-433.html>)
- 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>)
- The Marine Liability Act (<http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/M-0.7/>)
- The Marine Transportation Security Act (<https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/m-0.8/index.html>)
- The Canadian Navigable Waters Act (<https://laws.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/N-22/>)

Other Applicable Guidelines

- Environment and Climate Change Canada's Avoidance Guidelines (<https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/avoiding-harm-migratory-birds/protecting-at-sea.html>)

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

NIRB Number	Project	Project Title	Project Type
<i>Present Projects – approved or in operation</i>			
08MN053		Mary River Project	Mine Development
<i>Past Projects</i>			
24YN025		Kinngait beluga and walrus biopsy, tagging, camera, and drone work	Research (seasonal)
23YN048		Hudson Bay System Paleoceanography	Research

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	Terrestrial wildlife and migratory birds and their habitat
Potential effects:	Potential adverse impacts to migratory and non-migratory birds and their foraging and moulting colonies are likely, especially when flying drones at Walrus Island near Coral Harbour, which is in proximity to Coats Island located about 140 km south of Coral Harbour. Coats Island is a Migratory Bird Sanctuary which offers critical feeding and staging areas for nesting seabirds and shorebirds, including thick-billed murres, loons and other passerines.
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:	Proponent proposes to avoid the Coats Island and will only approach Walrus Island when carrying out the proposed project.
Proposed Terms and Conditions:	Fuel and Chemical Storage – 11 Wildlife General – 13 and 14 Migratory Birds and Raptors Disturbance – 15 through 17 Marin-Based Activities – 19 through 21, and 23

Valued Component	Local walrus and beluga populations, and other marine mammals and aquatic wildlife
Potential effects:	<p>The proposed project is likely to negatively affect the aggregation of local walrus and beluga populations — Atlantic Walrus (Central/Low Arctic Population), Beluga Whale (Eastern Hudson Bay Population), Beluga Whale (Eastern High Arctic Baffin Bay Population), and behaviour of individuals in a pod. Due to the goal of the project to provide baseline information for assessing the impacts from shipping activities on walrus and beluga whales, the proponent will be carrying project activities in areas where these marine mammals aggregate, including the Rowley Island Ecologically and Biologically Significant Area (EBSA) near Igloolik. Rowley Island EBSA offers critical habitat for several marine mammals including year-round feeding grounds for walrus, and a migration corridor in the fall for bowhead whales and beluga.</p> <p>The proposed project plans to use motorized boats to approach marine mammal aggregated areas and use invasive measures to take live samples from subjects of research interest, biopsy and satellite tags darted onto the walrus and beluga. However, the deployment of hydrophones in the water acts as a passive recorder and therefore is not likely to result in adverse impacts.</p>
Nature of Impacts:	Potential adverse impacts on local walrus and beluga populations and potentially other marine mammals are likely be low in magnitude, restricted to the zone of influence of 1 km around the project footprint for a period of 1 day each at all five sites, and reversible. Project activities may for a short time, affect wildlife migration and foraging

	behaviour, and may temporarily affect habitat use, including at haul outs.
Mitigating Factors:	Proponent proposes to follow through with their engagement with the local Hunters and Trappers Organizations to get buy-in before the carrying out of project activities. The potential impacts can be effectively mitigated or avoided with the implementation of the Board's terms and conditions.
Proposed Terms and Conditions:	Water courses/Water bodies – 6 Waste Management – 7 Fuel and Chemical Storage – 8 through 12 Wildlife General – 13 through 14 Marine-Based Activities – 18 through 24

Valued Component	Inuit harvesting and traditional land use activities
Potential effects:	No specific concerns or impacts to public and traditional land use activities in the area have been identified, however, 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.
Nature of Impacts:	Not applicable.
Mitigating Factors:	The Proponent proposes to follow through with their engagement with the local Hunters and Trappers Association/Organization to avoid the timing of traditional land use activities on the island and offshore waters.
Proposed Terms and Conditions:	Wildlife – General – 13 through 14 Marine-Based Activities – 18 through 24

Socio-economic effects on northerners:

Valued Component	Archaeological and historical sites
Potential effects:	No known sites are identified on the Walrus Island and other sites where field work is planned. The undertaking of the project activities primarily takes place at sea in the water column, with the exception of the placement of the time-lapse stationary camera which would be mounted to a fixture on shore.
Nature of Impacts:	Negative impacts are unlikely due to the absence of known sites.
Mitigating Factors:	The Proponent plans to engage community members to determine the exact location of the camera to avoid creating obstacles to subsistence harvesting and other land use.
Proposed Terms and Conditions:	General – 3 through 5

Valued Component	Community services and local economy
Potential effects:	The Proponent anticipates positive economic benefits relative to the undertaking of the proposed project in visits to the communities of Coral Harbour, Igloodik, Kinngait and creating community-led initiatives in

	the communities of Naujaat and Sanirajak. The Proponent plans to employ local labour, entirely or in addition to the Proponent's 2-person team, for conducting the project activities and to use local services for boating and lodging. This proposed project is small in scale but reoccurs over the span of multiple years (see Table 4).
Nature of Impacts:	Economic benefits to local business will be likely long-term as this is contributing to a longer term research, however, low in magnitude due to the scale of the project activities. Negative impacts on community services are not likely.
Mitigating Factors:	The Proponent plans to employ largely local labour and use local business.
Proposed Terms and Conditions:	Other – 25 and 27

Significant public concern:

Valued Component	significant public concern
Potential effects:	No 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:	Not applicable.
Mitigating Factors:	The Proponent engaged with the local Hunters and Trappers Association in the planning phase of the proposed project and demonstrated records of continuous engagement.
Proposed Terms and Conditions:	Other – 25 through 27

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.: 150413), to the Minister of Fisheries, and the NIRB (Online Application Form, April 14, 2025). 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

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.

Fuel and Chemical Storage

8. 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.
9. All fuel and chemical storage containers must be clearly marked with the Proponent's name for ease of identification.
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 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.
12. 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.

Wildlife – General

13. 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.
14. The Proponent shall not hunt or fish, unless proper Nunavut authorizations have been acquired.

Migratory Birds and Raptors Disturbance

15. 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*.
16. 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.
17. 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.

Marine-Based Activities

18. 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. Rowley Island Ecologically and Biologically Significant Area [ESBA]).
19. 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.
20. 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.
21. The Proponent shall ensure small launch vessels (e.g., zodiacs, kayaks) maintain a distance of 100 metres from seabird and seaduck breeding colonies.
22. 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.
23. 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.
24. The Proponent shall report all incidents, injuries or sightings of marine mammals to the appropriate authorizing agencies.

Other

25. 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.
26. The Proponent shall ensure that project activities do not interfere with Inuit wildlife harvesting or traditional land use activities.
27. 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 and/or Parks Canada 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 Coral Harbour, Igloolik, Kinngait, Naujaat, and Sanirajak.

Species at Risk

7. The Proponent review Environment and Climate Change Canada's "Environment Assessment Best Practice Guide for Wildlife at Risk in Canada", available at the following link: http://www.sararegistry.gc.ca/virtual_sara/files/policies/EA%20Best%20Practices%202004.pdf. The guide provides information to the Proponent on what is required when Wildlife at Risk, including Species at Risk, are encountered or affected by the project.

Migratory Birds

8. The Proponent should 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.

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 Fisheries and Oceans Canada's "Biopsy, tagging, acoustics, and drone work on walrus and beluga" project proposal. The NIRB remains available for consultation with the Minister regarding this report as necessary.

Dated July 15, 2025 at Iqaluit, NU.



Albert Ehloak, *Acting* Chairperson

Attachments: Appendix A: Species at Risk in Nunavut

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 Risk¹	COSEWIC Designation	Schedule of SARA	Government Organization with Primary Management Responsibility²
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

¹ The Department of Fisheries and Oceans has responsibility for aquatic species.

² 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.