



NIRB File No.: 25YN053

NIRB Public Registry Link: www.nirb.ca/project/126202

NPC File No.: 150803

July 24, 2025

Mark Gillespie
Fisheries and Oceans Canada
Freshwater Institute
501 University Crescent, Winnipeg
R3T 2N6

Sent via email: mark.gillespie@dfo-mpo.gc.ca

Re: Notice of Screening and Comment Request

Dear Mark Gillespie,

The Nunavut Impact Review Board (NIRB) received a referral to screen Fisheries and Oceans Canada's "Movement and genetics of whales in the Canadian Arctic using satellite telemetry, tissue biopsies, and photogrammetry" project proposal:

- June 11, 2025, the Nunavut Planning Commission noted it is outside the area of an applicable regional land use plan, and
- July 17, 2025, the NIRB received a complete application and assigned it file number **25YN053** - please reference this file number in all future related correspondence.

The NIRB has commenced screening the project proposal pursuant to the *Nunavut Agreement* and *Nunavut Planning and Project Assessment Act*¹ and by copy of this letter, **invites interested parties and municipalities potentially affected by the proposal to comment directly to the Nunavut Impact Review Board.**

¹ 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*)

SCOPE OF PROPOSED PROJECT

Location	Kitikmeot and Qikiqtani regions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gulf of Boothia: 50 kilometers northeast of Taloyoak; and, • Cumberland Sound: immediately south of Pangnirtung
Objective	The Proponent intends to better understand narwhal and beluga whale population estimates from aerial surveys, and to monitor behaviour, habitat use and movements in the Canadian High Arctic.
Timeline	3 to 4 weeks in total from June to November, 2025

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

- Marine-based research activities targeting beluga whales in Cumberland Sound and narwhal and possibly bowhead whales in the Gulf of Boothia for 3 to 4 weeks from June to November 2025
 - drone-based photogrammetry using remotely piloted aircraft to photograph and record videos, and collect blow samples
 - remote tissue biopsy sampling using custom crossbows, air rifles, and drone-deployed darts to collect biopsy tissue from individuals
 - movement monitoring using GPS satellite tags deployed by drone to adult whales
- Logistics in the Cumberland Sound
 - personnel include 2 local hires
 - using small boats to transport personnel and equipment to marine areas within the sound
 - lodging at community accommodation in Pangnirtung
 - using 2050 litres of fuel for boat operation
- Logistics in the Gulf of Boothia
 - personnel include 2 Fisheries and Oceans Canada staff and 2 to 4 local hires
 - using all-terrain vehicles to transport personnel and equipment to and from camp, and small boats for daily excursions to areas within the bay from camp
 - establishing, using and demolishing temporary field camp within an existing Inuit hunting camp in Lord Mayor Bay
 - using 2050 litres of fuel for boat operation and 16 litres for camp use
 - pumping less than 300 cm³ water from surface waters near camp for camp use
 - disposing of greywater near campsite and human waste at facilities.

Inclusion or Exclusion of Scoping List

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

Documents received and describing the proposal can be accessed from the NIRB's online public registry at www.nirb.ca/project/126202 including:

- *Commission Conformity Determination*
- *Commission Application*
- *NIRB's Online Application and Revised Application*
- *Non-technical Project Summary in English and Inuktitut*
- *Standard Operating Procedures from Fisheries and Oceans Canada on drone use on marine mammals*
- *Standard Operating Procedures from Fisheries and Oceans Canada on biopsy sampling on marine mammals*
- *Standard Operating Procedures from Fisheries and Oceans Canada on tagging marine mammals*
- *Support Letter from the Pangnirtung Hunters and Trappers Organization*
- *Support Letter from Taloyoak Umarulirigut Association*

The NIRB may request additional information at any time during the process.

By copy of this letter, the NIRB is inviting interested parties and municipalities potentially affected by the project proposal to comment directly to the NIRB by **August 15, 2025**.

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.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Please send 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/126202. Questions should be directed to the undersigned at 867-983-4603 or lcai@nirb.ca.

Sincerely,



Leila Cai
Impact Assessment Officer
Nunavut Impact Review Board

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

cc: Distribution List
José Audet-Lecouffe, Fisheries and Oceans Canada
Fisheries Protection Program, Fisheries and Oceans Canada
Richard Dwyer, Nunavut Water Board
General, Nunavut Water Board
Jared Ottenhof, Qikiqtani Inuit Association
Chris Spencer, Qikiqtani Inuit Association
Joel Forter, Qikiqtani Inuit Association
Assol Kubeisinova, Qikiqtani Inuit Association
Wynter Kulitktana, Kitikmeot Inuit Association
Tannis Bolt, Kitikmeot Inuit Association
Cory Barker, Kitikmeot Inuit Association
Pangnirtung Hunters and Trappers Organization
Hamlet of Pangnirtung
Taloyoak HTO Hunters and Trappers Organization
Hamlet of Taloyoak