



NIRB File No.: 25YN040
NPC File No.: 150780

July 24, 2025

To: The Honourable Joanne Thompson, P.C.
Minister of Fisheries
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Sent via email: joanne.thompson@parl.gc.ca

Re: Screening Decision for Fisheries and Oceans Canada's "ECWG Bowhead Whale Photo Identification and Biopsy Sampling" Project Proposal, Qikiqtani Region

Dear Honourable Minister:

On April 24, 2025, the Nunavut Impact Review Board (NIRB or Board) received a referral to screen Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO)'s "ECWG Bowhead Whale Photo Identification and Biopsy Sampling" project proposal from the Nunavut Planning Commission (NPC or 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 commenced screening this project proposal and assigned it file number **25YN040**.

Following the assessment of all material information provided, the NIRB is recommending that a review of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO)'s "ECWG Bowhead Whale Photo Identification and Biopsy Sampling" project is not required pursuant to paragraph 92(1)(a) of the *NuPPAA*.

Pursuant to its discretion under paragraph 92(2)(a) of the *NuPPAA*, the NIRB has determined that specific terms and conditions are appropriate for this project.

Accordingly, the NIRB is issuing the attached Screening Decision Report dated July 24, 2025, to the responsible Minister. The Screening Decision Report provides, among other things, the regulatory framework, project overview and the NIRB's assessment process, factors relevant for the determining significance of impacts and recommended project-specific terms and conditions.

Please note that the project proposal will not be enclosed due to the size of the electronic document and the limited bandwidth. However, an electronic copy of the project proposal is accessible online from the NIRB's online public registry at www.nirb.ca/project/126181.

Please note that, the Board only directly addresses this notice letters to those individuals considered to be a "responsible Minister with decision-making authority" for the project as set out under the *NuPPAA*. However, regulatory authorities and other authorizing agencies associated with a proposed project (e.g. Regional Inuit Associations, Nunavut Water Board) will continue to be copied on the Notice of Release of the Screening Decision Report. The NIRB is providing these parties with notice and access to the Board's Screening Decision Report as required under s. 200(2) and in support of these parties in the fulfillment of their responsibilities under the *NuPPAA* and the *Nunavut Agreement* to address, and as appropriate, implement, to the fullest extent possible, any relevant NIRB recommendations contained in the Screening Decision Report.

We look forward to receiving a response from the responsible Minister and the NIRB remains available for consultation with the Minister regarding this report as necessary. If you have any questions or require clarification, please do not hesitate to contact the NIRB's Manager, Impact Assessment, Kelli Gillard at (867) 983-4619 or kgillard@nirb.ca.

Sincerely,



Albert Ehloak
Acting Chairperson
Nunavut Impact Review Board

Enclosure (1): Screening Decision Report, NIRB File No.: 25YN040 (July 24, 2025)

cc: Jose Audet-Lecouffe, Fisheries and Oceans Canada