

Polar Bear Specialist Group of the IUCN

Press release November 12, 2011

Nunavut to increase harvest in Western Hudson Bay



The IUCN/SSC Polar Bear Specialist Group was asked by the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board to comment on a proposed increase in the total allowable harvest for the Western Hudson Bay subpopulation. An increase of the harvest was [opposed by the PBSG](#) and it was felt that any increase was contrary to the precautionary principle and premature given that two new subpopulation estimates would be available in the coming months. Despite this position, on October 28, 2011, [Nunavut made the decision](#) to increase the the total allowable harvest in WH from 8 to 21 bears.

Polar bears are a Vulnerable species under the [IUCN Red List](#) with habitat loss caused by global warming viewed as the major threat to the species. The increase in the total allowable harvest in the Western Hudson Bay subpopulation is unsustainable according to the best available scientific data. Aerial survey data collected by the Nunavut Government in 2011 has not been made public. A new mark and recapture estimate for the subpopulation is undergoing analysis and given that this provides a long-term trend indicator, it should provide a clearer indicator of status. To date, the PBSG has not been provided with scientific information that would support an increase in harvest.

Polar bear populations are susceptible to over-harvest. Historically, over-harvest has resulted in many subpopulations undergoing serious decline. Excessive harvest in Western Hudson Bay could cause irreparable harm given that the changing ice

conditions are lowering survival rates and may be reducing recruitment of young.

Signatories to the Agreement on Conservation of Polar Bears (1973) "shall manage polar bear populations in accordance with sound conservation practices based on the best available scientific data." (Article II) and thus, the harvest increase is contrary to the International Agreement on Polar Bears.

Quelle/Source:

<http://pbsg.npolar.no/en/news/archive/2011/WH-catch-Nunavut-2011.html>