

## **Written Submission No. 02**

### **2016 Draft Nunavut Land Use Plan**

#### **Proposed Land Use Designation Amendments and Additions:**

#### **Site # 41, Walrus Haul-outs (Ulliit), Qikiqtaaluk Region**

To: The Nunavut Planning Commission

From: The Qikiqtaaluk Wildlife Board (QWB), and the Hunters and Trappers Organizations (HTOs) of Grise Fiord, Resolute Bay, Arctic Bay, Pond Inlet, Qikiqtarjuaq, Pangnirtung, Iqaluit, Cape Dorset, Hall Beach, Igloolik and Sanikiluaq

#### **Background Information:**

Atlantic walrus are important to the nutritional, cultural and economic well-being and traditions of Inuit. They are also a vital component of the ecology of marine environments in Qikiqtaaluk Region.

Walrus haul-out on sea ice in winter and spring, and on land in summer and fall. They often haul-out in tight congregations on sea ice around stable polynyas in winter where food is readily available annually. In summer, they haul-out and congregate on low, rocky shores, often returning to known locations annually. Many annual and alternative haul-out sites are known to Inuit. Although occasionally they may use alternative locations in some years, they will eventually return to previously used haul-outs in future. Haul-outs are often small but heavily used areas. Traditional rules for the timing and method of approaching haul-outs are known and followed by Inuit in order to minimize disturbance.

In Inuktitut, walrus haul-outs are ulliit (ulli, singular). Habitats for ulliit are limited. Large numbers of walrus must be able to move easily, quickly and safely in and out of the water, especially in the presence of predators and human disturbance. Haul-outs must also be in close vicinity to suitable foraging habitats, mainly shellfish beds. Walrus are susceptible to impacts of human disturbance at and near ulliit. Repeated disturbance by people who do not have sufficient knowledge of approach methods known to Inuit may cause short or long-term abandonment of ulliit.

The 2016 draft Nunavut Land Use Plan identified and mapped only a few ulliit (site # 41) in Foxe Basin. Inuit know about the presence and locations of many ulliit throughout Qikiqtaaluk Region. All of these sites should be added and protected under the final Nunavut Land Use Plan.

Besides from being protected for ocean vessels, walrus should be protected from disturbance from aircraft and terrestrial vehicles. Walrus at ulliit on land and sea ice should be protected.

One of the most notable ice ulliit is near the year-round polynya around Dundas Island, north of Resolute Bay. Large numbers of walrus haul out onto the ice and feed in the waters nearby throughout winter. Each spring the polynya expands to the southwest toward Crozier, Little Cornwallis and Cornwallis islands. The walrus continue to haul out on the ice edges as the polynya expands until open water allows them to move farther. (Note: Although the sea ice in the spring expansion zone may appear solid in winter and early spring, it is highly unstable and unsafe for humans at all times.)

**Source of information:** Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit.

**Proposed Amended Restrictions:**

**Prohibited Uses:** The following uses are prohibited:

- Mineral Exploration and Production;
- Oil and Gas Exploration and Production;
- Seismic testing;
- Disposal at Sea;
- Quarries;
- Hydro-electrical and related infrastructure;
- Linear Infrastructure;
- Tourism; and
- Related research except Non-exploitive Scientific Research

**Conditions:**

- No vessel may approach within five (5) km seaward of a walrus haul-out, any time during the year.
- When walrus are present, fixed wing aircraft must maintain a minimum vertical setback of 460 m (1500 ft) above ground level (AGL) while within 310 m (1000 ft) of a group of walrus. Helicopters should remain at altitudes greater than 910 m (3000 ft) AGL when traveling within 1,610 m (1 mile) of a group of walrus.
- When walrus are present, walrus must not be approached by terrestrial vehicles closer than 800 m (0.5 mile) while the vehicle remains out of sight of the walrus.
- Any project in Nunavut that would violate these conditions is prohibited.

**Proposed Additional Walrus Haul-outs:**

Add the walrus haul-outs (ulliit) identified throughout Qikiqtaaluk region, as shown on the attached maps and in the associated shp files.

**References:**

Ristroph, B. 2016. Pacific Walrus Protection and Management in a Changing Climate: Findings from the 2016 Arctic Science Summit Seminar. Pacific Environment, San Francisco, USA. 45 pp.

[http://www.pacificenvironment.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/walrus-mgmt-report\\_final\\_gl.pdf](http://www.pacificenvironment.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/walrus-mgmt-report_final_gl.pdf)

US Fish and Wildlife Service. 2018. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Approach & Viewing Guidelines for Pacific Walruses. USFWS, Anchorage, USA. 2 pp. <https://s3.amazonaws.com/arc-wordpress-client-uploads/adn/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/08093104/walrus-viewing-guidelines-2018-1.pdf>

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