

To  
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**Standing Non-Detrimental Findings for Exports from Greenland of Products derived from Narwhal (*Monodon monoceros*)**

As is required under Article IV, Paragraph 2 of CITES, any export permit shall only be granted when the Scientific Authority of the State of export has advised that such export will not be detrimental to the survival of the species.

In determining the extent that harvesting of narwhals in Greenland waters for trade is potentially impacting natural populations, the following have been considered:

**Management**

- New regulations came into the Greenland legislation in March 2004 allowing the Home Rule Government to set quotas on narwhals in West Greenland. Quotas are not set for East Greenland. The quota and harvest is managed using separate reporting for each narwhal and a general reporting system - PINIARNEQ - where each hunter reports the total harvest of all species for each month.
- Quotas are based on management recommendations from international management organisations. The Canada/Greenland Joint Commission on Conservation and Management of Narwhal and Beluga (JCNB) gives recommendations for stocks of narwhal and beluga that are shared between Greenland and Canada. And the North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission (NAMMCO) gives recommendations for Greenlandic stocks not shared with Canada.
- The scientific advice for JCNB and NAMMCO on harvest sustainability is provided by a Joint Working Group (JWG) of the Scientific Working Group (SWG) of JCNB and a NAMMCO Scientific Committee Working Group. The NAMMCO SC reconsiders the recommendations of the JWG before they are given to the Commission. The JWG meets on a regular basis - approximately every two years - to discuss beluga and narwhal stock status, to perform stock assessments, and to develop joint recommendations for management.

## **West Greenland**

- Narwhals occur in four aggregations in West Greenland and only one, the Melville Bay, is considered distinct. The other three aggregations are suspected to be connected through annual migrations from Inglefield Bredning in summer, to Uummannaq in November and to Disko Bay in winter. Other stocks summering in Northern Canada winter in central Baffin Bay and do not seem to provide whales to the hunting grounds along the coast of West Greenland. A stock in Jones and Smith Sound may, however, be providing animals for the harvest in West Greenland.
- Surveys conducted in 2001 and 2002 in Inglefield Bredning show that the abundance of narwhals at this locality has decreased since last surveys in 1985-86 and that the decline in recent years may have been as large 10% per year. Surveys conducted in Disko Bay from 1981 through 1998 indicate an annual decline in abundance of narwhals of 3% per year.
- The level of removals of narwhals in West Greenland has increased considerably since the 1950s. The removals apparently peaked in the early 1990s where after they have remained relatively constant at 700 per year until 2004, where a quota was set. The increase in removals since the 1980s is considered a main cause of the observed decline in abundance in the two survey areas in West Greenland.
- Several assessment models testing different stock structure hypotheses for narwhals in West Greenland were run by the JWG in February 2004. Despite of some variation in the results of the different models, they all point to the conclusion that West Greenland narwhals are severely depleted and that immediate actions needs to be taken to halt the decline. The maximum recommended removal for West Greenland, excluding Melville Bay, was 135 whales per year (including loss).
- For Melville Bay it was not possible to develop a formal assessment because no abundance data were available from this area. Since surveys had failed to detect narwhals in Melville Bay, it was assumed that the abundance is low, and it was recommended that no further catches be taken from this area until abundance estimates are made available.
- JCNB recommended in 2004 that removals in Greenland should be reduced to a level as close as possible to the level recommended by the SWG (JWG). The Greenland Home Rule complied with this recommendation by introducing one-year quotas from July 1 2004, with a quota of 300 non-transferable units for western Greenland.

## **East Greenland**

- There is only little information on the population structure of narwhals in East Greenland. Genetic studies show that they are not related to those in Baffin Bay-Davis Strait.
- There is only little information on stock size and abundance of narwhals in East Greenland.
- Data on reported catches are available for East Greenland. They are un-corrected and trends are difficult to infer unless correction factors are applied. Current un-corrected reporting shows an average take of 80 narwhals per year.
- No assessment has been conducted for narwhals in East Greenland. The last considerations of NAMMCO SC relating to East Greenland narwhals are from 1999, where it was noted that present harvesting probably does not pose an immediate threat to the stock, considering the large area from which the whales are recruited relative to the restricted areas where hunting is conducted.

## **Trade and Export**

- Export of narwhal products from Greenland is mainly restricted to tusk, tooth and crafted parts of narwhal tusks. Because of several confounding factors, the statistics on export of narwhal products cannot be used directly to provide insight into the utilisation of narwhals in Greenland.
- The most valuable hunting product of narwhal in Greenland is the skin, also known as mattak. All mattak can be sold at the internal market in Greenland and no export occurs. The meat can be sold for much lower prices and also for local consumption only.
- Tusks have a relative low value compared with mattak, and trade in tusks is not the primary incentive for the narwhal hunt in Greenland. However, income from selling of tusks is also part of the subsistence economy, and it cannot be excluded that trade in tusk and crafted parts thereof is not influencing the harvest of narwhals.

## **Conclusion on non-detrimental findings for export**

- Although the increased removals since the 1980s is considered a main cause of the observed decline in narwhal abundance in the two survey areas in West Greenland, the current management system should allow exports of products from narwhals hunted in West Greenland to be non-detrimental to the survival of natural narwhal populations if the annual removal (including loss) of narwhals from specified areas in West Greenland are smaller than or equal to the scientific recommendations of the JWG. If removals from specified areas exceed the recommendations it cannot be concluded that exports are non-detrimental. The current recommendation is an annual removal (including loss) of no more than 135 narwhals from West Greenland excluding Melville Bay, and no removal from Melville Bay. The preliminary estimate of the removal (including reported loss) for 2004/05 - the first year of the quotation system - is 294 narwhals from West Greenland with 62 taken in Melville Bay.
- For East Greenland the lack of explicit scientific recommendations on sustainability makes it difficult to conclude on non-detrimental findings. The consideration of NAMMCO SC in 1999 that "present harvesting probably does not pose an immediate threat to the stock" and the lack of an apparent trend in recent catch statistics for East Greenland suggests that current takes in East Greenland may be non-detrimental. As narwhal in East Greenland will be taken up at the next meeting of the JWG to be held in October 2005, it is recommended that the status of non-detrimental findings for narwhal in East Greenland is reconsidered after the next meeting of the NAMMCO SC.
- As there is no trade-system in place that will distinguish whether narwhal products originate from whales caught in West Greenland excluding Melville Bay, in Melville Bay, or in East Greenland it cannot be concluded that the current export of narwhal products from Greenland is non-detrimental as, with the current catches, it might be detrimental to narwhals in West Greenland.

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