

Framework for Action for Management of Polar Bears in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region

2017

As recommended by:



WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT
ADVISORY COUNCIL (NWT)



Game Council

to:

**Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Canada
Minister of Environment and Natural Resources,
Government of Northwest Territories
Minister of Environment, Government of Yukon**

The Inuvialuit Settlement Region Polar Bear Joint Management Plan describes the management goal, objectives and recommended approaches for polar bears in the entire Inuvialuit Settlement Region (ISR), including NWT and Yukon. This Framework for Action, a companion document to the ISR Polar Bear Joint Management Plan, was developed at the same time to facilitate implementation of the management plan. This framework outlines actions and areas where further work should be directed. It will be used to develop an implementation table. This Framework for Action will be reviewed at the same time as the management plan.

This document and the management plan itself do not commit any party to actions or resource expenditures; implementation is subject to appropriations, priorities, and budgetary constraints of the participating parties.

For additional information, please refer to the management plan. Acronyms used in the table are explained at the end of this document.

Recommended Specific Actions for Management of Polar Bears in the ISR	
MANAGEMENT GOAL: To ensure the long-term persistence of healthy polar bears in the ISR while maintaining traditional Inuvialuit use.	
Objective #1: Collect traditional knowledge, scientific knowledge, and monitoring information in a timely manner to inform management decisions.	
Approach 1.1	Document traditional knowledge and use traditional knowledge to inform management decisions on an ongoing basis.
Action 1.1.1	Use the report <i>Inuvialuit and Nanuq: A Polar Bear Traditional Knowledge Study</i> and associated database to identify additional research needs and priorities.
Action 1.1.2	Make results of queries to the database from <i>Inuvialuit and Nanuq: A Polar Bear Traditional Knowledge Study</i> , available to management partners, as appropriate.
Action 1.1.3	Increase systematic collection and analysis of Inuvialuit observations.
Action 1.1.4	Develop and apply policy/best practices for traditional knowledge research in the ISR.
Approach 1.2	Monitor contaminants in polar bears.
Action 1.2.1	Develop a monitoring plan for contaminants in polar bears and seals (DFO).
Action 1.2.2	Implement plan to collect baseline information, followed by periodic monitoring of contaminants.

Recommended Specific Actions for Management of Polar Bears in the ISR	
Approach 1.3	Monitor polar bear subpopulations.
Action 1.3.1	Set up an inventory schedule (plan to monitor subpopulations).
Action 1.3.2	Investigate alternative methods to assess subpopulation size.
Action 1.3.3	Finalize Viscount Melville subpopulation abundance estimate in collaboration with Nunavut.
Action 1.3.4	Encourage enhanced reporting of local observations (e.g., body condition, litter size, sex, age, location, habitat, bear observations), quantify and map (linked to 1.1.3).
Action 1.3.5	Refine understanding of subpopulation delineation, including seasonal fidelity.
Action 1.3.6	Research changes in diet over time, in consideration of sex, age, and condition, using samples from research activities and harvested bears (fat, bone, hair/skin).
Action 1.3.7	Research changes in parasites and disease prevalence over time, in consideration of demographics and subpopulations.
Action 1.3.8	Develop data sharing guidelines or protocols amongst the parties involved in polar bear research and monitoring in the ISR.
Approach 1.4	Consider best available information on habitat and prey in polar bear management.
Action 1.4.1	Consider best available information from seal monitoring/research in polar bear management.
Action 1.4.2	Consider best available information on sea-ice conditions in polar bear management.
Objective #2: Adaptively co-manage polar bears and their habitat in accordance with the best information available.	
Approach 2.1	Review information annually to inform adaptive management.
Action 2.1.1	WMACs and Inuvialuit Game Council annually review information in collaboration with jurisdictions that share management authority.
Action 2.1.2	WMACs make management recommendations to federal and territorial governments.
Action 2.1.3	Identify priorities for scientific and traditional knowledge research.

Recommended Specific Actions for Management of Polar Bears in the ISR	
Approach 2.2	Communicate with harvesters and local communities to foster information flow in both directions.
Action 2.2.1	Continue/enhance HTC communications (for example, continue to send them posters of research projects and harvest information; use social media).
Action 2.2.2	Hold community meetings for information sharing.
Action 2.2.3	Share information at ISR research day.
Approach 2.3	Coordinate with other jurisdictions on a national and international level.
Action 2.3.1	Continue annual meetings of Inuvialuit-Inuit and Inuvialuit-Inupiat.
Action 2.3.2	Continue participating in Polar Bear Technical Committee (PBTC) and Polar Bear Advisory Committee (PBAC).
Action 2.3.3	Continue to participate in Canadian discussions regarding the implementation of the Circumpolar Action Plan for the Conservation of Polar Bears.
Action 2.3.4	Continue participating in international meetings and coordination (e.g., range state meetings, Polar Bear Specialist Group, Canada-US Oversight Group).
Action 2.3.5	Continue participating in Inuit Communications Group for polar bears.
Action 2.3.6	Coordinate actions and messaging related to CITES e.g., strengthen tracking of exports and update non-detrimental findings.
Objective #3: Encourage wise use of polar bear populations and all polar bear products.	
Approach 3.1	Continue to encourage a male-dominated harvest.
Action 3.1.1	Continue to implement HTC bylaws and associated regulations that prohibit taking females with cubs and bears in dens.
Action 3.1.2	Continue to implement the Inuvialuit-Inuit and Inuvialuit-Inupiat user to user agreements by setting quotas so that the female proportion of harvest does not exceed one third of total subpopulation harvest.
Action 3.1.3	Continue to provide community workshops and education on identifying sex of polar bears, as required.

Recommended Specific Actions for Management of Polar Bears in the ISR	
Approach 3.2	Manage human-caused mortalities so they do not exceed the quota.
Action 3.2.1	Continue tracking all human-caused polar bear mortalities through tag system including harvest, defense of life and property kills, industry-related mortalities, and other mortalities.
Action 3.2.2	Continue to enforce harvest quotas and the tag system.
Action 3.2.3	Annually review harvest based on all available information.
Approach 3.3	Continue to manage guided hunts to achieve conservation benefits.
Action 3.3.1	Continue to implement regulations specifying that unsuccessful guided hunt tags cannot be re-allocated.
Approach 3.4	Continue to regulate polar bear trade.
Action 3.4.1	Continue to regulate and track trade of polar bears and polar bear parts through permits.
Action 3.4.2	Investigate the use of PIT tags (passive integrated transponders) to facilitate increased traceability of hides.
Approach 3.5	Explore tools to investigate impacts of harvest on subpopulation trend.
Action 3.5.1	Hold workshop to better understand the model of Regehr <i>et al.</i> (2015) and its application in the ISR.
Objective #4: Minimize detrimental effects of human activities on polar bears and their habitat.	
Approach 4.1	Minimize detrimental effects of human-bear conflicts.
Action 4.1.1	Systematically track and compile records for all human-bear encounters or incidents (implement PBHIMS format).
Action 4.1.2	Analyze human-bear incidents and adaptively change advice as we learn more about appropriate mitigation measures.
Action 4.1.3	Develop guidelines for tourism operators and film crews interacting with polar bears.
Action 4.1.4	Promote bear awareness training for all visitors and workers in polar bear country.

Recommended Specific Actions for Management of Polar Bears in the ISR	
Action 4.1.5	Work with communities and industry to reduce human-bear conflicts.
Action 4.1.6	Encourage/help communities and MACA to review the design and operations of local landfills, including consideration of electric fencing.
Action 4.1.7	Support community bear patrols during key problem times/seasons, as necessary.
Approach 4.2	Minimize detrimental effects of research on polar bears.
Action 4.2.1	Annually provide information to PBTC on bears handled in the ISR and documented impacts.
Action 4.2.2	Advocate for further research regarding the impacts of handling.
Action 4.2.3	Explore alternate methods for subpopulation monitoring.
Action 4.2.4	Consider the need for research and provide advice on research projects to mitigate impacts to polar bears.
Action 4.2.5	Advocate for power analysis of existing data to determine the minimum number of bears needing to be handled to achieve sufficient confidence in results.
Approach 4.3	Minimize detrimental effects of development and industrial activity on polar bears.
Action 4.3.1	Improve tracking and analysis of the human footprint in polar bear range so that environmental screening and review can better take cumulative effects into account.
Action 4.3.2	Finalize denning habitat maps (from traditional knowledge and Resource Selection Function model) and make them available in digital and paper format.
Action 4.3.3	Continue to collect denning information through local observations of denning and collared polar bears.
Action 4.3.4	Use information from collared animals and from <i>Inuvialuit and Nanuq: A Polar Bear Traditional Knowledge Study</i> to help identify areas of significance for polar bears to develop mitigation measures.
Action 4.3.5	Develop protocol for surveying polar bear maternity denning habitat prior to industrial activity.
Action 4.3.6	Develop protocol/regulations for operating near active den sites, to limit industrial activity and disturbance of denning female bears.

Recommended Specific Actions for Management of Polar Bears in the ISR	
Action 4.3.7	Develop oil spill response protocols for polar bears.
Action 4.3.8	Develop protocol for shipping and traffic (boats, ships, aircraft, and other vehicles) to avoid disturbance of polar bears.
Action 4.3.9	Develop protocol for polar bear monitoring at industrial facilities.
Action 4.3.10	Develop guidance for industry on how to work with communities to avoid disturbance of subsistence harvest.
Action 4.3.11	Provide information and guidance into EISC, EIRB, and CEAA 2012 processes of screening, environmental impact assessment, and project approvals.
Objective #5: Communicate and share information on polar bears and impacts of climate change on polar bears.	
Approach 5.1	Encourage youth stewardship of polar bears in the ISR.
Action 5.1.1	Work with youth to teach about polar bear management in the ISR, the importance of polar bears in Inuvialuit culture and the impacts of climate change on polar bears.
Approach 5.2	Enhance national and international communications with a particular focus on climate change impacts on polar bears.
Action 5.2.1	Continue supporting development of websites to share information about polar bears and their management.
Action 5.2.2	Continue developing communication material (including update of fact sheets and brochures) on the cultural importance of polar bears to the Inuvialuit and how they are managed in the ISR.
Action 5.2.3	Share communication material on the impacts of climate change on polar bears.
Action 5.2.4	Share information about polar bear management at national and international fora (e.g., public meetings, media, conferences).

EXPLANATION OF ABBREVIATIONS:

CEAA 2012:	<i>Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, 2012</i>
CITES:	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species
DFO:	Department of Fisheries and Oceans
EIRB:	Environmental Impact Review Board
EISC:	Environmental Impact Screening Committee
HTC:	Hunters and Trappers Committee
ISR:	Inuvialuit Settlement Region
MACA:	NWT Municipal and Community Affairs
NWT:	Northwest Territories
PBHIMS:	Polar Bear Human Information Management System
PBTC:	Polar Bear Technical Committee
WMAC (NS):	Wildlife Management Advisory Council (North Slope)
WMAC (NWT):	Wildlife Management Advisory Council (Northwest Territories)
WMACs:	both WMAC (NWT) and WMAC (NS)