

## Walrus Data From Nunavut and Nunavik, 2003/4-2008/9

Amanda. Currie  
Department of Fisheries and Oceans  
Eastern Arctic Area  
P.O. Box 358  
Iqaluit, NU  
X0A 0H0  
[Amanda.currie@dfo-mpo.gc.ca](mailto:Amanda.currie@dfo-mpo.gc.ca)

### **Abstract**

Walrus harvest data in Nunavut are inconsistent and based on rough estimates. Culture and fear play a major role in why harvest data are incomplete and inconsistent. The data that is recorded are at best a rough estimate.

### **Introduction**

The collection of harvest data in the north has its challenges. There are many factors that need to be accounted for when requesting this information from the communities. Many communities are not equipped with the resources to collect record and share the information that is requested from them. At the community level many Hunter and Trapper Organization's (HTO) are given the responsibility to collect harvest data and report back to the respective government agency. Although the task seems easy, there are a few re-occurring reasons why data are not easily available. They include:

- HTO offices are understaffed on a regular basis;
- HTO offices have an extremely high turnover rate, and the responsibility to gather information is lost from one person to the next;
- Hunters are reluctant to report harvest data on the basis of future repercussions that may occur (harvest limits);
- Hunters are not aware that hunting data is supposed to be reported to HTO office; and DFO even though it is a requirement under the Marine Mammal Regulations;
- Hunters feel that reporting their catch to the HTO office is not a part of Inuit culture and makes the hunters feel like they are bragging;
- Hunters feel embarrassed when they are asked to report any animals that escaped or may have lost or during the hunt, they do not want to be stigmatized as a bad hunter.

All of these reasons must be considered when examining the hunt data for Nunavut.

With all of these factors being considered it is hard to determine the accuracy of the data received by DFO. This summary will examine the harvest data from the subsistence walrus harvest in Nunavut and offer some explanations as to why the reporting of data is difficult for some communities.

## **Methods**

### **Subsistence Harvest**

The DFO Eastern Arctic Area (EAA) office collects harvest data for Nunavut. Currently, hunting data are collected by several ways. At the beginning of each hunting year a form is sent out to each of the communities to aid in the recording of landed catches, wounded,

escaped, sunk and lost animals. These forms are set out in a way that the HTO member(s) can record the date of the harvest, the number of animals landed and how many animals escaped or sank. A reminder is sent within a few months to the HTO offices, that all hunting data should be recorded because the hunting data can be requested at any time. The HTO offices can send their hunting information to the area office by regular post, fax or electronically. If no harvest data are provided then a direct phone call is made to each HTO office and the hunting data are requested verbally. Most hunting data are collected through this phone call. If they are provided by the phone, it is requested that they provide an email or written document stating the same information for documentation purposes.

### Sport Hunts

In the past sport hunt information was gathered in a different way. As most walrus sport hunt licenses are issued to outfitters, it became easier for the outfitter to contact the EAA office/fishery officer and report how many hunts were successful. The enforcement officer would then record how many hunts were successful for that year in a separate database. Due to high turnover in the EAA office, sport hunt data is not sought after on a regular basis.

Currently the EAA office is working on a way to collaborate all the information and have the data centrally located so that they can be easily accessed. The area office is trying to improve the data forms and communication with subsistence hunters, sport hunters and outfitters so that the data that are shared are more accurate and dependable.

Results<sup>1</sup>**Table 1. Landed Catch (Subsistence Harvests) of Walrus in Nunavut and Nunavik, 2003-2009**

Community	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09**	Total	Avg.
Arctic Bay	0	1	ND	0	1	ND	2	0.3
Grise Fiord	7	5	2	5	4	ND	23	3.8
Pond Inlet	1	0	1	0	0	ND	2	0.3
Resolute Bay	6	4	1	0	1	ND	12	2.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>6.5</b>
Hall Beach	87	66	75	100	35	33	396	66.0
Iglulik	97	ND	100	184	54	74	509	84.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>184</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>284</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>905</b>	<b>150.8</b>
Arviat	5	ND	1	0	0	ND	6	1.0
Cape Dorset	1	ND	6	25	ND	ND	32	5.3
Chesterfeild In.	4	3	3	0	2	0	12	2.0
Clyde River	0	2	ND	1	0	ND	3	0.5
Coral Harbour	10	ND	15	15	4	ND	44	7.3
Iqaluit	1	ND	10	9	11	ND	31	5.2
Kimmirut	7	4	6	2	ND	ND	19	3.2
Pangnirtung	15	ND	ND	15	ND	10	40	6.7
Qikiqtarjuaq	1	0	ND	9	6	ND	16	2.7
Rankin Inlet	2	2	3	13	6	3	29	4.8
Repulse Bay	ND	3	6	6	12	ND	27	4.5
Whale Cove	ND	ND	ND	0	0	ND	0	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>259</b>	<b>43.2</b>
Akulivik	11	12	4	9	5	9	50	8.3
Aupaluk	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
Ivujivik	2	10	17	14	24	17	84	14.0
Kangiqsualujuaq	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
Kangiqsujaq	1	9	0	4	0	0	14	2.3
Kangirsuk	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0.2
Kuujuaq	0	0	0	5	0	0	5	0.8
Puvirnituk	9	0	8	9	21	13	60	10.0
Quaqtaq	6	11	5	2	3	6	33	5.5
Salluit	2	10	17	14	24	17	84	14.0
Tasiujaq	0	0	2	3	0	0	5	0.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>336</b>	<b>56.0</b>
Sanikiluaq	3	ND	ND	2	ND	0	5	0.8
Inukjuak	4	0	3	0	0	8	15	2.5
Kuujuarapik	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
Umiujaq	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>3.3</b>
<b>Annual Sum</b>	<b>282</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>285</b>	<b>446</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>1559</b>	<b>259.8</b>

'ND' indicates the community did not report its subsistence walrus harvest

<sup>1</sup> All tables and figures compiled from DFO data sources.

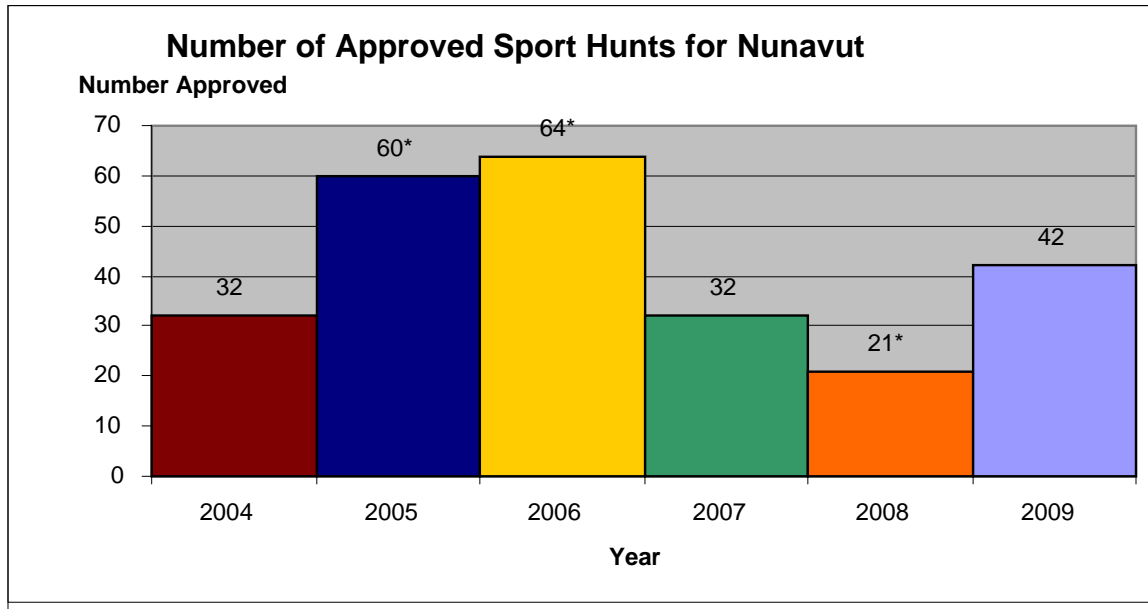


Figure1 – Walrus sport-hunt permits in Nunavut 2004-2009 (\* 2005, 2006, 2008 include sport hunts approved for Salluit)

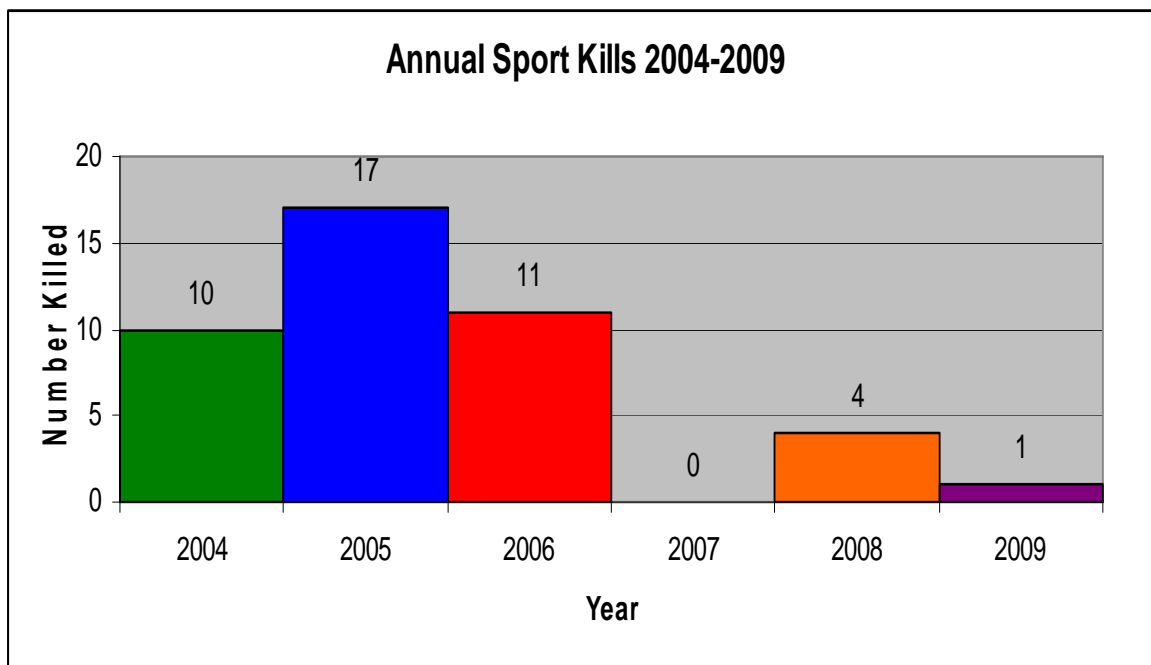
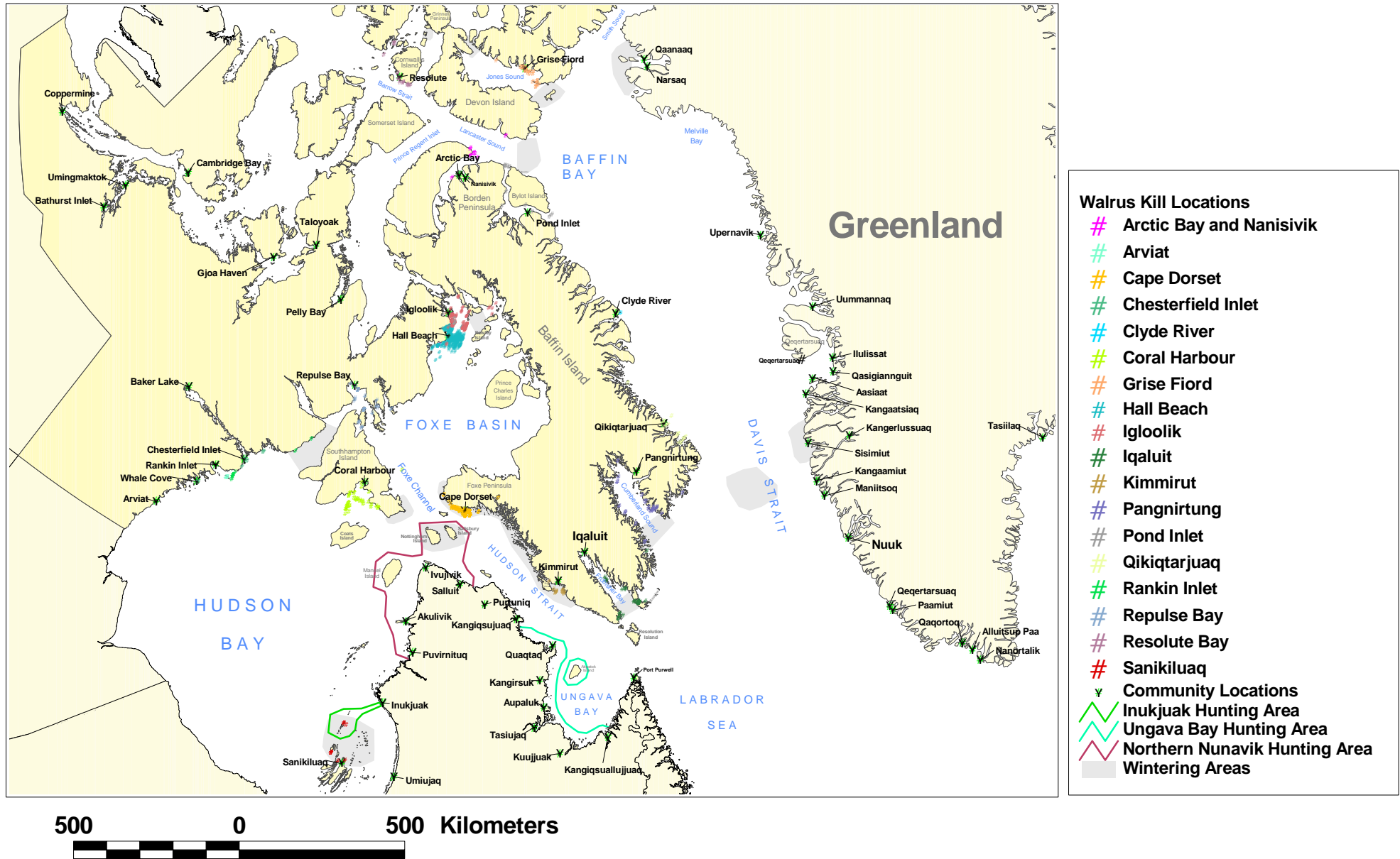


Figure 2. Walrus sport-hunt kills in Nunavut 2004-2009 These figures only concern Nunavut sport hunts.

Figure 2. Walrus harvest locations, 1996-2001, adapted from Priest and Usher 2004.



## **Discussion**

Previous to the 2008/2009 hunting season hunting data can be accepted as best-guessed. This paper is only going to compare the data for Nunavut communities. The landed average in 1996- 2003 (Stewart 2004) in the high arctic communities (Arctic Bay, Grise Fiord , Pond Inlet and Resolute Bay) was 14 walrus. The average for those same communities in 2003 to 2009 is 6.5 walrus. This new average could be attributed to accessibility, opportunity and desire. Many of these communities are experiencing climate change and have noticed that they have to go farther and farther each year to harvest certain species.

The 1996-2003 (Stewart 2004) the landed average for the two communities of Hall Beach and Igloolik has decreased from 192 to 150.8 walrus. This could be the result of the moratorium that Igloolik initiated for the sport hunts. The theory of the moratorium possibly has been carried over into the subsistence harvest, therefore, reducing the number of walrus harvested in that area.

The landed average in 1996-2003 (Stewart 2004) for the rest of the Nunavut communities that harvest walrus included communities in the Nunavik region. The landed average for the other communities in Nunavut for 2003-2009 is 43.2. This number is low and this is more likely a reporting issue. Most of these communities have at least one year of no reporting and others have two or three years of not reporting their harvest numbers to the appropriate agency. These communities are the communities that believe reporting

harvest data is optional and by sharing that information there could be serious repercussions. The overall landed harvest numbers are lower in most communities.

Since the 2003/2004 hunting season the person responsible for collecting the harvest data for the EAA has changed multiple times. It is difficult to determine the accuracy of the data for that reason alone. However, most communities will give a range for their walrus harvest numbers. By providing a range of animals harvested it allows for error without consequences. This way the EAA office can keep track of the animals harvested but without any details. However, if an estimate is all they can provide, it is accepted and understood that these numbers are not one hundred percent accurate.

For the 2009/2009 hunting season, subsistence harvest data were scarcely recorded (see table 1). This could be attributed to the recent turnover in the EAA office. A person was designated to collect the harvest data and was unsuccessful in this task. Since then, a new person has taken on the responsibility to gather hunting data. The 2008/2009 hunting data are not complete and very unreliable. Hall Beach and Igloolik are the only two communities that consistently reported their subsistence harvest (2003-2009). Since these two communities harvest walrus consistently and the HTO's have good working relationships with the hunters, these numbers can be considered more accurate than other communities. Many communities have not reported their walrus numbers because there is no tagging system in place for walrus as there is for narwhal. When subsistence numbers are reported to DFO, it is usually a rough estimate. There is hesitation when the HTO's report walrus harvests, brought on by the fear of having a quota or harvesting limit implemented in the future. It can also be attributed to the lack of information being shared with the communities. Many communities feel like they



provide information to certain government agencies and never see or hear the results of their work and efforts. The HTO offices are frustrated when they do not receive the results of work and therefore feel that their efforts were futile. The communities often wonder why they should provide data when they never see the results. Although the 2009/2010 walrus numbers are not included in this report, the communities have been able to provide some numbers to the EAA already, which is an improvement from last year.

The walrus sport hunts that occur in Nunavut are usually conducted through an outfitter but that is not always the case. As a condition on the walrus sport license a successful hunter is to report the harvest to the EAA office. This method of gathering data is inconsistent and relies heavily on the outfitter to report. Sport hunt data are usually provided by the outfitter however, the numbers of walrus that are struck and lost are usually not provided. If the EAA is not informed of a successful walrus sport hunt, a cross reference may be done on any Marine Mammal Transportation Licenses concerning walrus to the sport licenses that were issued. These data also come from phone conversations and emails. For the 2009/2010 hunting season only a few sport licenses have been issued. To date 2009/2010 there has been one successful walrus sport hunt reported.

## Conclusion

It is apparent that communication and consistency are important aspects of the statistic reporting system that need to be improved upon and encouraged. A large part of the non-reporting is based on a lack of trust and mis-communication. Most of the recent harvest data of walrus are at best an estimated guess by most communities. The EAA tries to get the community to narrow it down to the closest possible range of numbers so that an average can be calculated that is relatively close to the actual number of walrus that were harvested. The HTO's seem to be more comfortable with sharing the information after brief conversations with the office regarding this season's harvest. The EAA is trying to acquire harvest data as they occur rather than asking the HTO office and the hunters to remember their harvesting efforts from the year before.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank to Rory MacDonald (DFO) for helping me organize my thoughts and Rob Stewart (DFO) for giving me the opportunity to share those thoughts.

## References

- Priest, H. and P. Usher. 2004. The Nunavut Wildlife Harvest Study August 2004, Final Report. Published by the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board, Iqaluit, NU. 822 pp
- Stewart, D. B. 2004. Update COSEWIC status report on Atlantic walrus *Odobenus rosmarus rosmarus* (Linnaeus, 1758). Unpublished 6-month interim report. 81 pp. *in litt.*