

## 1. PROPOSAL FOR INCREASED OBSERVATION EFFORT IN 2022 – APPROVED BY NAMMCO28-2021

### 1.1 BACKGROUND

The Council (Council-HoD meeting March 2020) allocated NOK 300,000 for observation activities in 2021 “with the view to strengthening the implementation of the Observation Scheme. The allocation is pending the submission by CIO of a detailed plan for scope of activities and its subsequent approval of Council”.

The following proposals were submitted by the CIO to the FAC meeting in October 2020:

- To cancel the observation activities in 2021 due to the COVID-19 situation and to transfer the allocated budget of NOK 300,000 for observation activities in 2021 to 2022.
- To allocate a further NOK 200,000 for observation activities in 2022, which combined with the carryover from 2021, brought the total budget available to NOK 500,000. It was argued that no observers had been active since the 2017 season, and NOK 500,000 would approximately represent the combined cost, had the observation scheme been active in the 5 years 2018–2022. For information, the average annual expenditure from all active years is NOK 129,308 (1998–2007) and NOK 109,363 for the last 10 active observation seasons (2008–2017).
- The new observation scheme approved in 2019 introduced the option of carrying over allocated budgets for observation activities from several years to enable an increased effort in one specific year.

The presented proposal for the scope of observation activities in 2022 is reiterated below, under item 2.

The FAC meeting in October 2020 agreed to cancel observation activities in 2021 due to Covid-19 and discussed the proposal for increasing the 2022 budget. The FAC asked the CIO to return with additional information on the added value that the increase of NOK 200,000 would have on the observation activities proposed for 2022.

### 1.2 HOW TO MEASURE THE VALUE OF AN OBSERVATION SCHEME

The provisions of the Observation Scheme define the purpose as collecting reliable information on all kinds of hunting activities. From this it follows that the more reliable the information collected is, the greater value it holds for NAMMCO. Information is primarily obtained through contracting observers to go to certain areas and observe certain hunts, and by the CIO reviewing national legislation.

In previous years, the scope of observations was mostly chosen based on a principle of rotation between member countries and hunts. Within the new Observation Scheme, the CIO has identified the following additional criteria for deciding the observation focus in a year:

- Hunting level
- Hunts not covered by national inspectors
- Hunts for which the SC or CHM request data (e.g., on struck and lost)
- Maximising the effort to reach the objectives of the Scheme by allocating money from several years into one year.

Hunts that are not a priority:

- Small scale hunts occurring infrequently and in remote areas
- Hunts not practically feasible for observation due to specific hunting methods or other aspects

With the scope defined, maximising the outcome for the allocated budget first and foremost requires identifying the locations and times of year that give the highest probability of successfully observing the chosen hunts, based on catch data from previous years.



### 1.2.1 Financial aspects

The cost of the Observation Scheme has two main drivers: the number of observers and the duration of their assignments.

For the sake of simplicity, one may divide the observation budget into the following expense categories:

- Costs that vary with the number of observers but are independent of the duration of the assignment (i.e. travel costs to and from and internally in the country of focus, cost of insurance and equipment)
- Costs that vary with the duration of the assignment and increase per contract day (i.e. honoraria, per diem and accommodation costs)

A multitude of combinations may be used to optimise and maximise the allocated budget for observation activities (see appendix 1). Generally speaking, it is most cost-efficient to have fewer observers undertaking longer assignments. The relationship between budget and provided observation days is, however, not linear. An increased budget can increase the observation effort measured in days of observation, but this is not automatically the case because both the costs that are dependent and independent of the assignment duration (as outlined above) need to be considered. For example:

Looking at maximising the number of observations days achieved for an allocated budget, 1 observer contracted for 5 weeks (option 2, appendix 1) gives a greater return than 2 observers for a total of 6 weeks (option 3). This is due to less travel time and less travel, insurance and equipment expenses. When compared with the original budget of NOK 300,000, option 8 gives 5 observation days less for a NOK 28,000 increase in the budget. Option 11 gives 16 extra observation days for a budget increase of NOK 100,000.

When considering the possible combinations, it is important to note that experience has shown that contracting observers to work for more than 4-5 weeks might be difficult.

Another aspect to consider is the possibility of creating opportunities for observing several hunts in one location or one hunt in several locations. This can potentially increase the probability of observing hunts during a contract period. Added value for the Observation Scheme of a higher budget

As shown in appendix 1, a higher budget can lead to a higher observation effort measured in days of observation given an optimal combination of number of observers and length of time each observer is contracted for. A higher observation effort means that more hunting events can be observed, and more information can be collected. When more information is collected, more robust and reliable conclusions can be drawn from the observation scheme to inform management.

The possibility of deploying more than one observer also creates the possibility that observation can take place at different locations and at different times, which enhances the probability of observing several hunts.

Currently the pool of available observers consists of 16 persons. Using the principle of rotation among the observers, contracting one observer each season means that most of the observers will be “sleeping partners” with a need for renewed training courses before going into the field. Also not being called to serve may be counterproductive to maintaining their interest in NAMMCO and their willingness to offer their services. Increasing the likelihood of being called upon to serve arguably helps maintain the motivation and interest of the observers to be part of the pool.

### 1.2.2 Added value for NAMMCO of a higher observation effort

NAMMCO has always taken a certain pride in the fact that the organisation is the only one with a functioning international observation scheme for marine mammal hunts with observers active every season.

In 2022, 4 years will have passed without active observers, and a new observation scheme has been in place since 2019. Allocating a substantial amount of money for the 2022 season would signal that NAMMCO continues to support the scheme, and that it is of high importance to its members. It also indicates that the organisation continues to invest in the scheme at the same level and without reduction.

A significant amount of resources have been invested in defining the new Scheme. Making a major allocation and effort in the first year of resuming observations sends a strong signal to the international community that NAMMCO is committed to ensuring that the hunts taking place within its area are sustainable and responsible and that observation activities have an important role in monitoring this.

## 2. PROPOSAL FOR 2022 SCOPE AS PRESENTED TO FAC

### 2.1 BACKGROUND

The purpose of the Observation Scheme is to collect reliable information on all kinds of hunting activities in the NAMMCO Member Countries, with the objectives to

- a) provide a mechanism for NAMMCO to oversee whether recommendations made by NAMMCO are implemented and national regulations are adhered to
- b) provide a foundation for the member states to evaluate whether a recommendation is serving its purpose or not
- c) contribute to the improvement of the national regulation of hunting activities in the Member Countries

One of the tools available for meeting the objectives is the appointment of observers to observe hunting and inspection activities in member countries.

For 2021 Greenland is the focus of the observation activities. The selected species and hunts are quota restricted and governed by national regulations arising from recommendations arriving from NAMMCO<sup>1</sup>. The species have not previously been the focus of observation activities. The specific hunts are carried out by a method identified as of concern by NAMMCO due to relatively long time to deaths. They also represent hunts where the Scientific Committee has expressed a desire to get more information on struck and lost, especially on how to obtain good reliable information. Currently the estimated struck and lost numbers used in NAMMCO advice range from 10% to 30% depending on hunt and time of year.

Once the scope has been approved by Council, the Secretariat (in co-operation with the authorities in Greenland) will develop a specific plan for the observation activities. In line with the proposed guidelines, the detailed plan of observation activities will only be known to the authorities in the relevant member countries and the Secretariat.

### 2.2 PROPOSED SCOPE

Walrus, narwhal and beluga hunts in West Greenland carried out with rifles and handheld harpoons from dinghies/small boats.

#### 2.2.1 Species and hunting methods

All three targeted species are hunted in West Greenland whereas only walrus and narwhal are hunted in East Greenland.

The East Greenland catches are few compared to West Greenland. For walrus, the average reported catches of the last six years (2015-2020) have been 5% of a total of 693 animals and 17 % of a total of 2,463 narwhals.

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<sup>1</sup>

Parliamentary Act No 12 of 29 October 1999 on hunting amended in No 1 of 16 May 2008

Executive Order:

- No 3 of 27 January 2017 on protection and hunting of beluga and narwhal
- No 20 of 27 October 2006 on protection and hunting of walrus



Also, the narwhal quotas for 2021 have been reduced significantly. The proposal is therefore to focus on West Greenland to utilise the observer resources most efficiently.

The targeted hunting method, rifle with handheld harpoon, has been identified by NAMMCO as a method of concern given the reported relatively longer times to death and the lack of reliable struck and lost information.

Belugas and narwhals in West Greenland are also hunted by netting or from kayaks with handheld harpoons (no rifles allowed). However, these hunts are considered less optimal to observe because:

- Netting is only allowed in Qaanaaq in North Greenland during the dark winter months. Struck and lost is not considered an issue as it is anticipated that all animals are retrieved dead or alive. Should an animal escape the net, it is assumed to be unharmed and alive.
- Hunting from kayaks takes place in Qaanaaq, Upernavik and Uummannaq (all north of Disco Bay). Compared to the rifle hunt there is no noise from a motor and the hunters get closer to the animals and due to the method (harpooned first), there are few struck and lost incidents. The hunt is not recommended for observation from a safety perspective, as it would require observation from a kayak. Also, few animals are taken per hunting trip.

### 2.2.2 Areas and time periods

It is nearly impossible to find one location and period that coincides for all three hunts. The proposal for locations and timing are informed by reported catch statistics from previous years (2015-2020).

The following locations, time of year and hunts have been identified as priorities:

- Sisimiut in March – April: Beluga
- Sisimiut in March – April: Walrus
- Upernavik in April – May: Narwhal
- Uummannaq in October – November: Narwhal
- Upernavik in in October – November: Beluga

#### 2.2.2.1 Walrus:

Current West Greenland management areas/populations and permitted hunting periods:

West Greenland winter population, from 66° N (south edge of the mouth of Søndre Strømfjord) and 70° 30 'N (northwest tip of Hare Island), hunting allowed March 1 to April 30, both days inclusive.

Northwest Greenland stock, areas north of 70°30'N (northwest tip of Hare Island), hunting allowed October 1 to June 30, both days inclusive.

Chosen management area and time:

- West Greenland stock: Sisimiut in March and April.

The last 3 years Sisimiut has recorded increasing numbers of catches. In the 3-year period 2015-2017, a total of 60 walrus were caught in Sisimiut. 24 walrus in 2015, 20 walrus in 2016 and 16 in 2017. For this period, the average number of annual catches was 20. During the following 3-year period 2018-2020, a total of 80 walrus were caught in Sisimiut, 28 walrus in 2018 and 26 walrus in both 2019 and 2020. For this period, the average number of annual catches was 26.7. This is an increase of 34%.

#### 2.2.2.2 Narwhal:

Hunting permitted: 1 January to 31 December

Current West Greenland and Disko Bay management areas:

- 1) Etah 2) Inglefield Breeding (Qaanaaq), 3) Melville Bay 4) Uummannaq and 5) Inglefield Bredning (Disko Bay – West Greenland)



Chosen management areas and time: Upernavik during April - May and Uummannaq during October - November

The average number of annual catches for the period 2015-2020 was approximately 61 animals in Upernavik and approximately 96 animals in Uummannaq.

#### 2.2.2.3 Beluga:

Hunting permitted: 1 January to 31 December

Current management areas: Qaanaaq and West Greenland.

Chosen management areas and time: Upernavik during October and Sisimiut during March-April

The average number of annual catches for the period 2015 – 2020 was 51 in Upernavik and 11 in Sisimiut.

### 3. BUDGET

With reference to appendix 1, option 12, representing NOK 431,000, is recommended.