

1993/94 harvest. Of the 36 bears taken in last year's harvest, 40 percent were females (Table 3). More comprehensive research is planned for this population within the next 5 years, including reassessment of the size of the population. The number of sport hunts guided for the last two seasons was 10 and 5, respectively.

M'Clintock Channel (MC). A 6-year mark-capture population study was conducted in the mid-1970's. The population was estimated to be 900 polar bears. Local hunters advised that 700 might be a more accurate estimate. Under a Local Management Agreement between Inuit communities that share this population, the harvest quota for this area has been revised to levels expected to achieve slow growth based on the more conservative population estimate of 700 polar bears. The boundaries are supported by recoveries of tagged bears and movements documented by telemetry in adjacent areas. Table 3 shows the status of the population as increasing based on the 3-year average and the 1993/94 harvest. Of the 24 bears taken in last year's harvest, 33 percent were females.

Western Hudson Bay (WH). The population estimate of 1,200 is believed to be conservative as a portion of the southern range has not been included in the mark-recapture program. Research programs on the distribution and abundance of the population have been conducted since the late 1960's, with 80 percent of the adult population marked. Mark-recapture studies and return of tags from bears killed by Inuit hunters have provided extensive records. The population data is rated as good. Table 3 shows the status of the population as increasing based on the 5-year and 3-year average of harvests and the 1993/94 harvest. Of the 32 bears taken in last year's harvest, 40.6 percent were females. During the open-water season, this population appears to be geographically segregated, although it is intermixed with the eastern Hudson Bay and Foxe Basin populations during the ice covered months.

The Western Hudson Bay population is shared with Manitoba, where polar bears are listed as a protected species under the Wildlife Act of 1991. There is no open hunting season and polar bears cannot legally be hunted at any time of the year by anyone. To hunt polar bears, including hunting by Treaty Indians, would require a permit from the Minister and no such permits are currently being issued. Under the terms of a Local Management Agreement, Manitoba is allocated a quota of 27 tags out of 55 for the Western Hudson Bay population. Eight tags are held in

reserve by Manitoba for the control program and accidental deaths associated with the research program. The remaining 19 are currently on loan and included in the NWT total quota (GNWT). This does not mean that there is a total ban on hunting polar bears in the future. The Minister can authorize the taking of bear for any purpose "not contrary to public interest." The current policy is that no person will be granted a permit to hunt polar bear until it is established there is a harvestable surplus over conservation needs of the population that takes into account political and scientific concerns (Calvert et al. 1995).

The Service proposes to approve this population with the provision that a management agreement between the NWT and Manitoba is in effect with scientifically sound quotas to ensure the total harvest in this population is sustainable.

6. Status of Shared Populations the Service Proposes Not To Approve

All of the following populations are shared with either Greenland or another Canadian province or both, and do not have formal agreements as to how the portion of the population outside the NWT will be managed. Management agreements drafted in 1994 for the Davis Strait, Foxe Basin, and Southern Hudson Bay populations attributed to NWT communities the existing, unchanged harvest levels and documented for Ontario, Quebec, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Greenland the current known annual harvest. Following completion of comprehensive population studies, including both scientific and traditional knowledge, the sustainable harvest of each population will be estimated and allocated fairly between all user groups through joint negotiations. These joint management negotiations are ongoing. The next PBTC meeting will be in Quebec partly to facilitate joint management discussions. Canada and Greenland are currently conducting joint research to confirm shared population boundaries and population estimates. Once this joint research report is completed, the two countries have agreed to move ahead with negotiations on developing joint management agreements (GNWT).

Queen Elizabeth Island (QE). The population is estimated at 200. Current information is that there are few polar bears in this remote area. The reliability of the data is poor. A likely scenario is that this area will eventually be managed as a sanctuary for polar bears. The status of the population was stable at the 5-year and 3-year average of

harvests and the 1993/94 harvest. Of the 11 bears taken in last year's harvest, 29.3 percent were females. Only one sport hunt occurred during each of the past two seasons. A Local Management Agreement has not been finalized for this population. In addition, this population is shared with Greenland although the movement of polar bears between the NWT and Greenland is thought to be small in this population (see Parry Channel/Baffin Bay below).

Parry Channel (PC) and Baffin Bay (BB). This area is being considered as a unit as it is unclear what fraction of the Greenland harvest was from either Parry Channel or Baffin Bay populations. Information on the amount of exchange between these populations in Canada and Greenland is important for management since polar bears are harvested by communities in both countries. The current population estimate of 2,470 polar bears is considered preliminary and conservative. It was obtained by pooling the previous estimates for Lancaster Sound (1,657, increased to 2,000, based on sampling bias in the original studies that could have resulted in an underestimate of the population) and NE Baffin (470) populations with the assumption that a distinct population for west Greenland would not be found. The population data is rated as fair. The status of the population as shown in Table 3 is decreasing for the 5-year and 3-year average of harvests and the 1993/94 harvest. Last season's harvest was 200 bears (31.9 percent females). Most sport hunting has occurred in Parry Channel, 28 in 1993/94 harvest season and 24 in 1992/93. Limited guided sport hunts of 5 and 3 occurred in Baffin Bay during the same seasons (GNWT).

According to Born (1995) there is little information available on the take of polar bears in Greenland. There is no quota for harvest of polar bears in Greenland. Regulations prohibit the use of vehicles for the hunt and stipulate that hunters must be citizens of Greenland and hunt or fish full time. As of January 1, 1993, Greenland residents are required to obtain special permits to hunt polar bear. The reporting of take is voluntary, and the system of reporting has not worked reliably for many years. Greenland needs to obtain information on the number and sex ratio of bears taken in all areas and number of animals in the populations to establish a sustainable harvest level of polar bears. There is an ongoing Canadian-Greenland joint study to obtain data to delineate the range and number of bears in the shared populations. A summary of results of a polar bear survey suggests a harvest of 40 to 60 bears each year in