

**Public hearing: Consideration for Non-Quota  
Limitations for polar bears in the Nunavik Marine  
Region and Eeyou Marine Region Cree-Inuit Overlap  
Area**



Submission by the Regional Cree Trappers Association to the Nunavik  
Marine Region Wildlife Board and the Eeyou Marine Region Wildlife Board

January 2024

## **Background:**

The Cree Trappers' Association responsibility is to protect and promote the interests and values of Eeyou/Eenou trappers, traditional pursuits, and governance of hunting territories in Eeyou. This mandate extends to the management of territory and wildlife resources and of environmental matters. Historically, Cree harvested polar bear occasionally and opportunistically. However, recent interviews with Cree land users suggest that this is no longer the case and that current harvest by Cree's is done in the case of defense of life and property. Though polar bear is not a targeted species for Cree harvest, coastal land users encounter polar bear while on the land. In recent years, Cree land users have reported increased encounters with polar bear near their communities and hunting camps, posing a concern for safety and creating a barrier to accessing the land.

The Cree Trappers' Association Eeyou Marine Region (CTA-EMR) Department was established under the Eeyou Marine Region Land Claims Agreement in 2012. As a part of the departments mandate to monitor harvesting in the EMR, the CTA-EMR department, in collaboration with the Eeyou Marine Region Wildlife Board (EMRWB) have established a polar bear observation and complaint system to monitor land user interactions with polar bear within the EMR. Additionally, to address land user concerns related to polar bear safety, the CTA-EMR department has taken on a key role in offering non-lethal polar bear deterrent training to coastal land users.

Within the EMR-NMR Cree-Inuit Overlap Area, the CTA recognizes the unique dynamic of shared jurisdiction and harvesting territories with our Inuit neighbors to the north. We are committed to collaborating with Nunavik Inuit communities to uphold their traditional harvesting practices, provide mutually beneficial services, and support families of blended Cree and Inuit heritage.

## **Current Polar Bear Management Efforts:**

### ***Polar Bear Observation and Kill Reporting:***

Since the establishment of the CTA-EMR Department, local CTA-EMR Officers in each of the coastal communities have recorded polar bear observations, encounters and defense of life and property (DLP) kills. This information is shared with the EMRWB and MELCCFP to aid in wildlife management decisions for the region.

In 2020, the CTA-EMR department developed a standardized reporting package to ensure proper documentation of polar bear observations and DLP (Defense of Life and Property) kills. The package, completed by the CTA-EMR local officer and land users, is used whenever a polar bear is observed, encountered, or killed. It provides guidance on recording details such as the bear's sex, age, and body condition for observations, encounter chronology and deterrent methods for encounters, and sampling and tagging requirements for DLP kills. This package also provides guidance for the distribution of polar bear meat when possible.

This voluntary reporting is advertised annually through local presentations, social media, and pamphlets within our communities. Additionally, polar bear encounters and harvest are monitored by the CTA-EMR officers through social media and CTA bush radio (satellite radios). Though reporting is not mandatory in the EMR, we believe that the social acceptance of reporting and reporting rate are high.



**POLAR BEAR REPORT FORM**  
Checklist

- Fill out polar bear report form page 1.
- If the observer is reporting a complaint, fill out page 2 of report form.
- If the observer is reporting a kill, fill out polar bear kill form.
- Gather any pictures of the polar bear, tracks, or area of observation.

For Defense of Life/Property Kills:

- Collect ear tag from polar bear.
- Collect jaw bone or pre-molar, fur, and tissue samples from polar bear.

Is the hide being kept?\*  Kept  Destroyed

If the hide is being kept, keep hide and contact EMRWB about getting hide tag.

If the hide is being destroyed, record method here: \_\_\_\_\_

Is the meat salvageable?  Yes  No

If the meat is salvageable, contact EMRWB for distribution contacts.

If the meat is being destroyed, record method here: \_\_\_\_\_

\* Note that the hide is not automatically given to the shooter/tallymen. Please make this clear.



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CONSEIL DE GESTION DES RESSOURCES  
FAUNISTIQUES DE LA RÉGION MARINE D'EYYOU  
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**POLAR BEAR REPORT FORM**  
Observation/Complaint  
Eeyou Marine Region Wildlife Board



<b>1. Report Information:</b>			
1. Report ID: _____	2. Report Type: <input type="checkbox"/> Observation <input type="checkbox"/> Complaint	***If you answered "Complaint" in Field 2 (Report Type) fill page #2 of reporting form.***	
<b>2. Observation/Complaint Information:</b>			
1. Community: _____	2. Date Observed (YY-MM-DD): _____	3. Time Observed (HH:MM): _____	
4. Location:			
Coordinates (DD): _____		Description: _____	
5. Recorded By: _____		6. Date Recorded (YYYY-MM-DD): _____	
<b>3. Observer Contact Information:</b>			
1. Name: _____	2. Phone Number: _____	3. Address: _____	
<b>4. Observation Type (check all that apply):</b>			
<input type="checkbox"/> Live Bear	<input type="checkbox"/> Dead Bear/Kill	<input type="checkbox"/> Conflict	<input type="checkbox"/> Tracks <input type="checkbox"/> Scat <input type="checkbox"/> Den
<b>5. Bear Details:</b>			
1. # of Bears: _____	2. Sex: <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	3. Age: <input type="checkbox"/> 2 Years <input type="checkbox"/> C.O.Y <input type="checkbox"/> Sub-Adult <input type="checkbox"/> Yearling <input type="checkbox"/> Adult	4. Condition: <input type="checkbox"/> 3-Average <input type="checkbox"/> 4-Fat <input type="checkbox"/> 1-Skinny <input type="checkbox"/> 2-Thin <input type="checkbox"/> 5-Very Fat
<b>6. Additional Observation Details:</b>			
_____			

Figure 1: Example of EMR polar bear reporting package.

**Polar Bear Sighting Notices and Deterrent Services:**

The Cree Trappers' Association utilizes the voluntary polar bear observation reporting system as a way to provide notices to land users and community members when polar bears are near a community or near hunting camps and frequented areas. These announcements are made through social media and bush radio. Additionally, the CTA has set aside funding to aid in the monitoring and deterrence of polar bear during the spring goose harvest. We believe that these services play a key role in the success of our voluntary reporting program.



Figure 2: Example of social media posting for polar bear sightings near the community of Wemindji.

### **Polar Bear Safety Training:**

In response to concerns raised by land users, the CTA-EMR department began offering polar bear safety training sessions in 2019. The CTA, in partnership with the EMRWB and Andy McMullen's BEARWISE, offered 3-day workshops in each coastal community. Tallymen, land-users, and relevant community workers were invited to participate. These workshops provided information on polar bear ecology, guidance on preventing and responding to polar bear encounters, and hands-on training for non-lethal polar bear deterrents (Figure 3).

Following a spike in polar bear encounters in the spring of 2022, land users requested another offering of these courses. In 2023, the three-day course was offered in Waskaganish, Wemindji and Chisasibi due to heightened human-polar bear interactions observed in each locality.

The CTA retains a list of all trained community members as a resource to hire polar bear guards for research and tourism purposes.

In addition to hosting polar bear safety workshops, the CTA-EMR department provides free non-lethal polar bear deterrents to coastal land users.



*Figure 3: Coastal Tallymen Practicing Non-Lethal Polar Bear Deterrent Methods*

### **Current Cree Harvest Levels:**

Throughout the entire Eeyou Marine Region (EMR & Overlap Zones), the CTA has recorded between zero and four DLP kills per year, with an average of one DLP kill per year for the entire region (Figure 4). From observation, years with earlier ice melt have resulted in increased polar bear encounters and DLP kills, for example, the four DLP kills in 2021. Additionally, in our reports, it has been expressed that the encounters are related to polar bears searching for food and being attracted to scents at camps (fish nets, food in cabins) or in the community (garbage dump). We anticipate that these encounters may increase if ice and prey sources become less predictable.

Within or nearby the EMR-NMR Cree/Inuit Overlap Joint Zone the CTA has recorded five polar bear observations, one of which was a defense of life and property kill. This defense of life and property kill occurred in November of 2022, near Cape Jones (Figure 5, point 5), where a land user was setting a fish net.

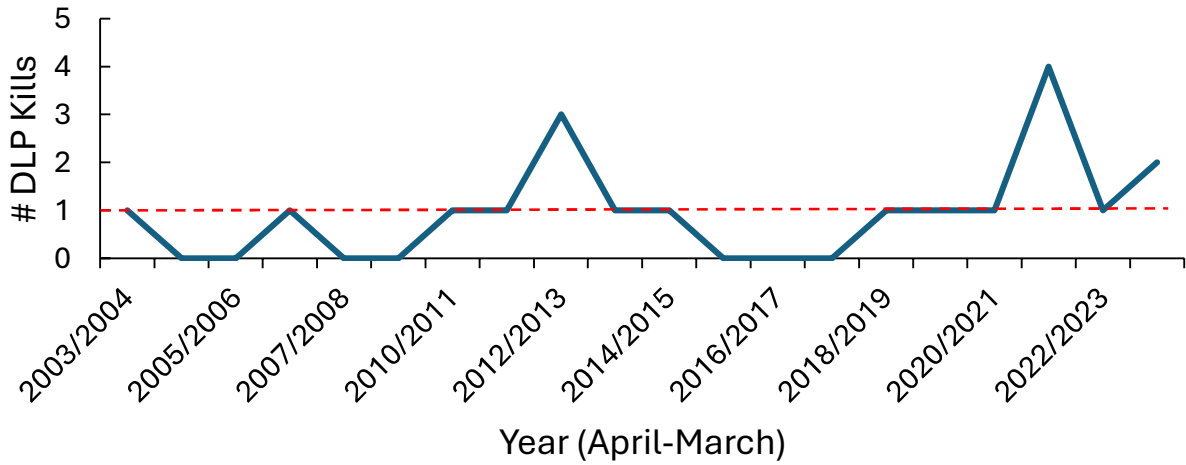


Figure 4: Defense of Life and Property Kills Reported in the Eeyou Marine Region (ENTIRE REGION) (2003-2024) (blue) with average DLP kills (red dash).

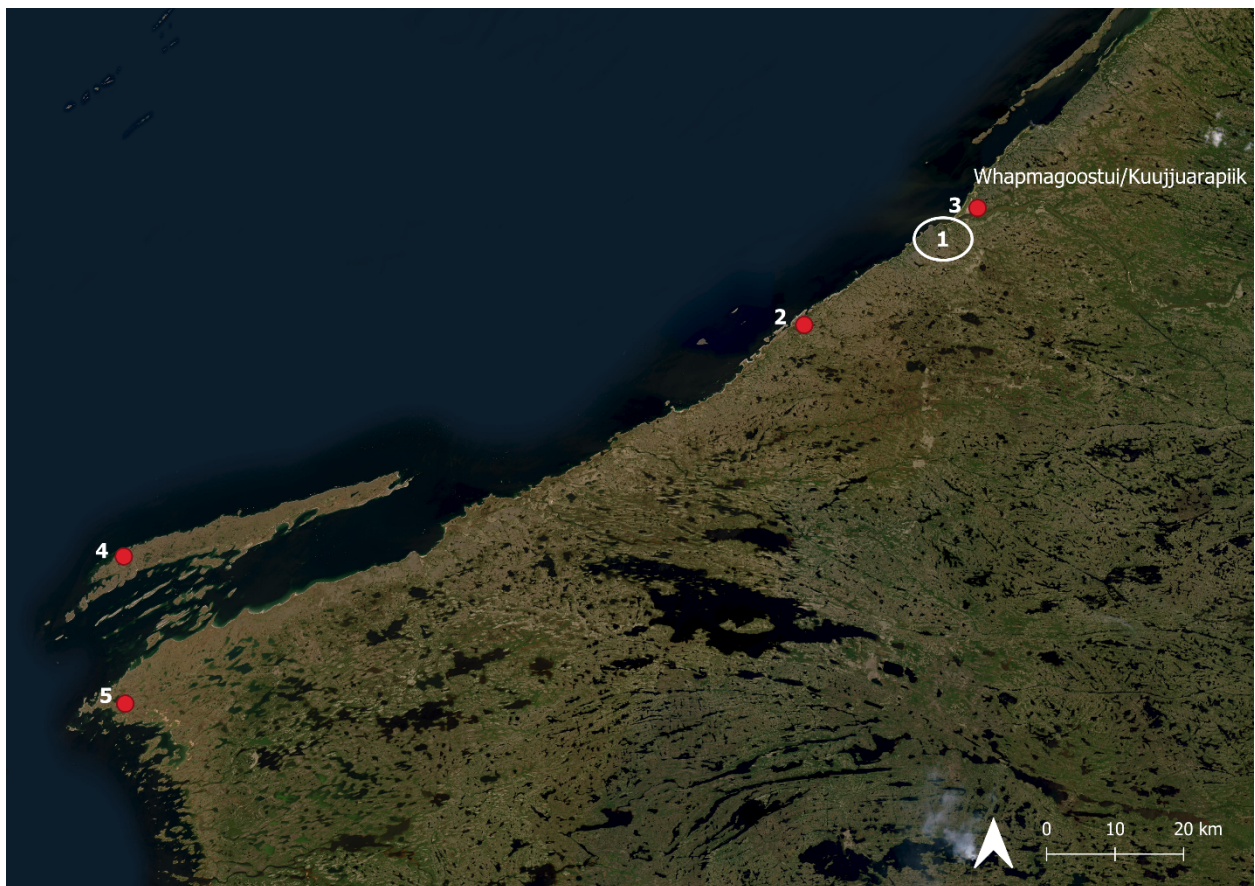


Figure 5: CTA-EMR Polar Bear Observations – Within/Near EMR-NMR Cree/Inuit Overlap Joint Zone (2016-2024).