

## Marine Environmental Working Group (MEWG) Meeting

**Meeting ID:** M-2003025  
**Group / Organization:** MEWG Members and Observers, Baffinland and Consultants  
**Meeting Location:** Conference Call  
**Meeting Chair:** Cortney Oliver

Organization Name	Participants
<b>Member Organization</b>	
Mittimatalik Hunters and Trappers Organization (MHTO)	None
Igloolik Hunter and trappers Organization (IHTO)	None
Sanairaijak Hunters and Trappers Organization (HBHTO)	Laimike Ullapak (LU)
Nangmoutaq Hunters and Trappers Organisation (NHTO)	None
Ikajutit Hunters and Trappers Association (IHTA)	None
Baffinland Iron Mines Corporation (Baffinland)	Cortney Oliver (CO), Janet Merkosak (JM1) Translator Joe Tigullaraq (JT) Translator Jesse Manufor (JM), Todd Swenson (TS) Megan Lord-Hoyle (MLH)
Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC)	Jessica Kassar (JK) Paul Smith (PS) Jordan Hollman (JH)
Qikiqtani Inuit Association (QIA) and Consultants	Connor Goddard (CG) Bruce Stewart (BS) Lindsay Galbraith (LG)
Government of Nunavut (GN)	Jennifer Williams (JW)
Parks Canada (PC)	Scot Burley (SC), Marie-Claude Martel(MCM)
Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO)	Marianne Marcoux (MM) Jose Audet-Lecoutte (JAL) Colin Kovachik (CK),
Natural Resources Canada (NRCan)	Clarrise Fiset (CF)
<b>Baffinland Consultants</b>	
WSP Golder	Andrea Locke (AL) Patrick Abgrall (PA) Phil Rouget (PR)
<b>Observer Organization</b>	

Organization Name	Participants
CIRNAC	Absent
World Wildlife Fund (WWF)	Sam Davin (SD),
Nunavut Impact Review Board (NIRB)	Absent
Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency (CANNOR)	Absent
Oceans North (ON)	Kristin Westdal (KW) Alex Ootoowark (AO)
Transport Canada (TC)	Adam Downing (AD) Jaideep Johar (JJ),
Makivik	Absent
Others	

## AGENDA

Item	Time	Activity
1	2:45 – 3:45	Revisiting Baffinland's 5 year monitoring Plan
2.	3:45 – 4:00	Summary of Actions and wrap-up

## SUMMARY OF ACTION ITEMS

Action ID	Responsibility	Item Description	Due Date	Status
M-14062022-04	Daniel Coombs (DFO)	Provide MEWG and TEWG for review the details and report of the sampling program in the Robertson River area.	September 30 <sup>th</sup> , 2025	Not started – DFO asked to update the due date. QIA is still interested in the report.
M-12122023-09	DFO	DFO to provide aerial survey program results from Steensby Inlet area to the IHTO.	Not specified	Not started. – Clarify this action from the December MEWG minutes where it was actioned.
M-12122023-05	DFO	DFO to find the studies on where narwhal and beluga are located in the winter in the area of the Southern shipping route and provide this information to the MEWG.	Not specified	Not started.
M-12122023-02	DFO	DFO to follow up with IHTO regarding identified calving areas in the Clyde River and Arctic Bay areas	Not specified	Not started.
M-14052024-08	DFO	To meet offline with Andrea Locke (WSP) on the gauge discussion and seek experts within DFO that can provide advice on the issues raised with tidal gauge monitoring.	Not specified	<b>In progress.</b> This has lost some traction, PH (DFO) will follow up with colleagues on this.
M-05062024-03	BIM	To meet with Igloodik to hear their concerns and adjust the mapping for spill modelling if we need to.	Not specified	<b>In progress.</b> BIM has started Steensby engagements.
M-09012025-1	BIM	To organize an interim virtual MEWG in the next 8 weeks to discuss the 5-year monitoring plan for the Northern Shipping Route previously shared in May and June 2024.	End of February or 2 <sup>nd</sup> week in March	<b>Completed:</b> A virtual meeting was organised on March 20 <sup>th</sup> .
M-09012025-2	BIM	To confirm the fuel used by vessels when they turn off their scrubber. Whether it is Ultra Low Sulphur Fuel (ULSF) or Marine Gas Oil.	As soon as possible	<b>Completed:</b> The ships use Marine Gas Oil (MGO)

Action ID	Responsibility	Item Description	Due Date	Status
M-09012025-3	QIA	Bruce Stewart QIA to share his thoughts and recommendation on the sedimentation issue in the MEEMP program in an email to Cortney	As soon as possible	<b>Completed</b> – emailed on Feb 28 <sup>th</sup> , 2025
M-09012025-4	BIM	BIM to hold an information session on the ToR at the same meeting as action M-09012025-1.	End of February or 2 <sup>nd</sup> week in March	<b>Completed:</b> An adhoc MEWG/TEWG was organised on March 20th
M-09012025 -5	BIM	BIM committed to provide duration of vessels staging at Ragged Island and proportion of vessels that transited directly to Milne Port compared to those that staged at Ragged Island for the 2024 shipping season. This is to evaluate the risk of hull fouling at Ragged Island.	Not specified	In progress

## MEETING MINUTES

The meeting began without a roll call, as all attendees were visible on the screen. CO (BIM) confirmed that the meeting would proceed in English unless translation was required. Janet Merkosak was introduced as the interpreter, and participants were invited to request translation if needed.

The primary focus of the meeting was to discuss Baffinland's five-year monitoring plan, first introduced in May and reviewed again in June in Ottawa. Due to low participation in the previous discussion, this meeting aimed to revisit the topic. CO (BIM) thanked stakeholders for their written submissions as well as Environment and Climate Change Canada for confirming they had no comments.

### Presentation on the Five-Year Monitoring Plan

#### *Marine Mammal Aerial Survey Program*

Patrick Abgrall (WSP) explained that aerial surveys would return to their original three-year cycle, as conducted in 2013, 2016, and 2019. This decision was based on 2023 survey results, which indicated that narwhal abundance levels in Eclipse Sound remained consistent with previous years. Additionally, COSEWIC designated the local narwhal population as "not at risk," recognizing that natural fluctuations in numbers occur. Given this, conducting annual surveys was deemed unnecessary.

#### *Bruce Head Shore-Based Monitoring Program*

While aerial surveys will not be conducted annually, the Bruce Head program will continue, providing insight into narwhal abundance, distribution, and group composition. Drones will be used to supplement data collection, particularly for monitoring calf populations. Baffinland will also maintain engagement with local hunters for observational input.

#### *Ship-Based Observer Program*

With shipping operations returning to the Early Revenue Phase and fewer vessels operating in Eclipse Sound, icebreakers—previously used for observer deployment—will no longer be required. Instead, the Marine Mammal Observer Network and drone surveillance will be utilized to monitor whale behavior. Baffinland remains open to suggestions for alternative, safe, and effective monitoring methods.

#### *Acoustic Monitoring Program*

Acoustic monitoring has been conducted annually for the past six years, providing a strong understanding of underwater noise levels and animal exposure. Since there are no planned increases in shipping for 2025, additional acoustic monitoring is not deemed necessary at this time.

#### *Marine Environmental Effects Monitoring Program (MEEMP) & Non-Indigenous Species (NIS) Monitoring*

Andrea Locke (WSP) provided an overview of the MEEMP and NIS/AIS programs, which monitor water and sediment quality, benthic fauna, fish health, and invasive species. The plan remains largely unchanged from 2024. However, sediment quality and benthic infauna sampling follow a three-year cycle, with 60 stations sampled every six years. Due to larger Cape-size ships entering the port, sampling at eight stations near the ore dock will continue annually through 2026.

#### *Discussion on Baseline Year Comparisons*

Patrick Abgrall (WSP) emphasized the importance of considering improvements in survey methods over time. In 2004, narwhal population estimates ranged from 9,000 to 37,000, whereas by 2013, improved counting techniques, including aerial photography, allowed for more accurate estimates. When comparing 2004 to 2023 data, there is no statistically significant difference in narwhal abundance.

Additionally, the number of project vessels in the area was relatively low between 2005 and 2012 (20 vessels), compared to 231 non-project vessels. Therefore, attributing narwhal population changes solely to Baffinland's shipping activities does not present a complete picture.

#### *Closing Remarks*

CO (BIM) concluded the meeting by outlining the recommendation process. Members have 30 days to submit comments. If further discussion is needed, an additional 30-day period will be provided for final member recommendations (FMR). She thanked participants, translators, and attendees, encouraging anyone with further questions to reach out via email.

The meeting was adjourned