



COMPENDIUM OF CANADA'S ENGAGEMENT IN INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL AGREEMENTS AND INSTRUMENTS

Memorandum of Understanding between Environment and Climate Change Canada and the United States Department of the Interior for the Conservation and Management of Shared Polar Bear Populations

SUBJECT CATEGORY:

Biodiversity / Ecosystems

TYPE OF AGREEMENT / INSTRUMENT:

Canada – United States

FORM:

Memorandum of Understanding

STATUS:

Signed by Canada May 8, 2008

LEAD & PARTNER DEPARTMENTS:

Leads: Environment and Climate Change Canada and U.S. Department of the Interior

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

Web Links: N/A

Contacts:

[ECCC Inquiry Centre](#)

COMPENDIUM EDITION:

July 2022

PLAIN LANGUAGE SUMMARY

Canada and the United States share management responsibilities for the Southern Beaufort polar bear subpopulation. Indigenous peoples from both countries have harvesting rights and as such, it is important for the countries to share Indigenous Knowledge and science about their respective regions and adaptively manage as required.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is to facilitate and enhance coordination, cooperation and development of partnerships between the Participants and with other associated and interested entities, regarding the conservation and management of polar bears. In addition, the MoU provides a framework for the development and implementation of mutually agreeable immediate, intermediate and long-term actions that focus on specific components of polar bear conservation.

KEY ELEMENTS

The MoU requires the establishment of a Bilateral Oversight Group that will carry out the operations as described in the Memorandum.

EXPECTED RESULTS

This agreement is expected to achieve enhanced, collaborative action on polar bear management and conservation via a set of described activities within the MOU. The Oversight Group meets as required to ensure advancement of coordinated action.

CANADA'S INVOLVEMENT

This MoU is important to Canada because we share a polar bear subpopulation with the United States, and it provides a mechanism by which consideration of science and Indigenous Knowledge can lead to enhanced management and conservation of the species. Canada has a similar arrangement in place with Greenland for other shared subpopulations.

This MOU is not legally binding and creates no legal obligations on the Participants. However, the need for cooperative action for a shared species is noted as being essential for effective management and the development of appropriate conservation measures.

RESULTS / PROGRESS

Activities

Environment and Climate Change Canada and the Department of the Interior (US Fish and Wildlife Service) last met in 2009 to establish a Bilateral Oversight Group. Since that time, collaborative research has been carried out on the Southern Beaufort subpopulation, but there are currently no plans for a subsequent meeting of the Oversight Group. A collaborative study to provide updated abundance estimates for the Southern Beaufort Sea and Northern Beaufort Sea polar bear subpopulations is currently underway.