

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN ENVIRONMENT CANADA
AND THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR FOR THE
CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF SHARED POLAR BEAR
POPULATIONS

Environment Canada, through the Canadian Wildlife Service, and the U.S. Department of the Interior, through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, hereinafter called "the Participants":

CONSIDERING that the Governments of Canada, United States of America (United States), Norway, Denmark (for Greenland), and the Russian Federation are parties to the 1973 multilateral Agreement for the Conservation on Polar Bears, which provides an international framework for polar bear conservation;

UNDERSTANDING that the significant relationship between Canada and the United States for the conservation and management of the North American shared polar bear populations includes cooperation among the federal authorities of the United States and Canada, the Native/Aboriginal people of both countries, and state and provincial/territorial authorities;

DESIRING to facilitate enhanced conservation and management of polar bears throughout the Arctic Region, and particularly of the shared populations between Canada and the United States based on the best available scientific information and aboriginal traditional knowledge;

RECOGNIZING that Canada and the United States are parties to a number of Treaties and Conventions that provide for bilateral cooperation related to the conservation of species and the ecosystems on which they depend; and

AFFIRMING that this Memorandum of Understanding is intended to facilitate the efficient and effective coordination of these cooperative activities;

Have reached the following understandings:

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Memorandum of Understanding is to facilitate and enhance coordination, cooperation and the development of partnerships between the Participants, and with other associated and interested entities, regarding the conservation and management of polar bears and to provide a framework for the development and implementation of mutually agreeable immediate, interim and long-term actions that focus on specific components of polar bear conservation.

II. ORGANIZATION: Establishment of a Bilateral Oversight Group

1. In order to provide direction and oversight, the Participants plan to establish an ad hoc Oversight Group comprising of representatives from the U.S. Department of the Interior, Environment Canada, state and provincial/territorial authorities, and from Native/Aboriginal people of both countries that have expertise and/or management experience in polar bear conservation and will therefore invite the following to participate:
 - a) the Director General of the Canadian Wildlife Service;
 - b) the Director of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service;
 - c) one representative of Canadian aboriginal organizations;
 - d) one representative of Native/Tribal government of Alaska;
 - e) one representative from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game; and
 - f) one representative from the Canadian Provincial/Territorial Authorities.
2. Each member of the Oversight Group is to designate an organizational contact. The Oversight Group will plan to meet at least annually. These meetings are to be organized, on a rotational basis, by the Participants.
3. The Oversight Group may establish sub-committees or working groups to provide advice to the Participants regarding particular program areas. One such working group should be a Scientific Working Group to assess the available information and aboriginal traditional knowledge on the North American polar bear populations.
4. The Oversight Group may invite representatives of other entities, non-governmental organizations, or individuals to participate in their deliberations and, as appropriate, it should facilitate cooperation with such entities.
5. The Oversight Group will make recommendations to the Participants on priorities and action items.

III. OPERATIONS

1. Implementation of this Memorandum of Understanding is to be in accordance with the existing international Treaties and Conventions in force between Canada and the United States, as well as the federal, state, provincial/territorial and local laws, and the conservation priorities of each country;
2. The Participants will coordinate with other relevant Departments and Agencies, as needed to fulfill the objectives of this Memorandum of Understanding;

3. Participants will develop, implement, review and coordinate specific cooperative conservation projects and programs; and will integrate such cooperative projects and programs into their conservation priorities; and
4. The Participants will focus on the following activities, and may develop and implement any other actions that they may decide upon:
 - a) Developing a cooperative polar bear conservation action plan;
 - b) Working to identify key polar bear habitats and developing recommendations for habitat conservation measures;
 - c) Share information on what the Participants are currently doing for polar bear conservation and discussing additional appropriate actions;
 - d) Defining the relationship between future efforts on polar bear conservation and the conservation of other Arctic species to model efforts for a comprehensive Arctic Species Conservation Initiative;
 - e) Developing mechanisms for increasing the capacity to conduct research, to gather and utilize aboriginal traditional knowledge and to monitor the status and trends of polar bear populations;
 - f) Developing a plan for jointly enhancing forecasting models to better understand ecosystem changes that affect polar bears in North America;
 - g) Identifying and prioritizing information needed to fill informational gaps and establish baseline data, including, but not limited to, data needed to link demographic parameters to changes in the seasonal availability of sea ice;
 - h) Identifying infrastructure and capacity needed to fully implement an action plan;
 - i) Jointly developing baseline information on polar bear population trends and natural and man made factors affecting polar bear populations, including enhanced telemetry studies;
 - j) Developing cooperative outreach and educational materials to educate the general public on polar bear conservation; and
 - k) Considering the development of a bilateral agreement between the United States and Canada similar to the agreement recently concluded between the United States and the Russian Federation for their shared populations.

Activities undertaken pursuant to this Memorandum of Understanding are subject to the availability of funds and other relevant resources available to each Participant, and to the laws and regulations of the countries involved.

This Memorandum of Understanding is not legally binding and creates no legally binding obligations on the Participants.

For Environment Canada:

For the U.S. Department of the Interior:



Minister of the Environment
Environment Canada

Secretary of the Interior
U.S. Department of the Interior

May 8, 2008
Date:

May 8, 2008
Date: