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Exploratory Inshore Ice Fishing for Turbot

In April 2008, our HTO took advantage of an exploratory fishery to determine the extent of the turbot resource in the areas adjacent to our community. The intent of this project was to assess if it was feasible to start a “community based” commercial fishing program in the future. Such a commercial fishery, accompanied by a suitable fish processing facility, has the potential to provide employment to residents of Grise Fiord and thereby reduce the present high unemployment rate.

The short-term objective of the project was to determine whether there are turbot in Jones Sound, where they are located and under what conditions. The data gathered during this project would be supplied to NWMB/DFO so that they can start the process of a stock assessment.

The estimated cost of this project was \$35,290 which was to be funded by a contribution from the GN Department of Environment of \$24,800, while the remainder of \$10,490 was going to be footed by our HTO and Nattivak HTA in Qikiqtarjuaq providing the Trainer.

Government of Nunavut (ED&T) was also kind and generous enough for making available their excess hauler, kites, twines, hooks and related fishing gear.

However, due to delays in arrival of the necessary equipment and various other factors, the project had a late start. In fact ice conditions were bad enough to carry over the funds available to us and complete the exploration the following year in spring of 2009.

In the spring of 2009, the project was finally in full swing. Five residents of Grise Fiord continued with the project and went fishing several days at a time. After several attempts at various locations in Jones Sound, a single turbot was caught much to the delight of the HTO and the community of Grise Fiord. There were other by-catches of sharks, skates and other fish common in the fishing of turbot.

It is encouraging to see there is an inspiration in the community to continue with the project. There is proof there is turbot in Jones Sound. There are aspiring fishers and boards and agencies as well as the Hamlet Council who are anxious to keep this going and supports this promising venture in the future.

Unfortunately, our co-ordinator and beloved HTO Manager has since passed on putting our project in low gear. It is the full intent of our HTO to get back to the main stream of exploratory turbot fishery and identify future prospects to enhance the marine economy for Grise Fiord.

Thank-you.