

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Legislation Committee
Answers to questions on notice
Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities portfolio
Budget Estimates, May 2012

Program: Division or Agency: 1.2: Marine Initiatives and Rio+20 Taskforce **Question No:** 029

Topic: Changes to Greenland's quota

Proof Hansard Page and Date 73

or Written Question: (22/5/12)

Senator Birmingham asked:

Senator BIRMINGHAM: In summary, what are the quota changes for Greenland and the other Indigenous subsistence countries? Are they up or down?

Ms Petrachenko: I will just double-check on Greenland. For Russia, America and St Vincent and the Grenadines they are the same, so there is no change there. I think Greenland is looking to increase its quota by nine or 10 whales, but I would have to take that one on notice.

Answer:

Kingdom of Denmark on behalf of Greenland

Denmark, on behalf of Greenland, submitted a proposal to the International Whaling Commission (the Commission) to renew Greenland's quotas for Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling, for a period of six years to 2018, with the following annual strike limits: 19 fin whales, two bowhead whales, 10 humpback whales, and 178 minke whales off West Greenland, and 12 minke whales off East Greenland.

The Commission did not approve the increased quotas and as Denmark did not subsequently put forward a proposal to extend the quotas at existing levels, Commission approval for Greenland's Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling quotas is set to expire on 31 December 2012.

St Vincent and the Grenadines, Russia and the United States

Russia, St Vincent and the Grenadines and the United States submitted to the Commission a joint proposal to renew their Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling strike quotas for a period of six years to 2018, but with no change to the annual strike limit for any population targeted by these countries. These quotas were approved by the Commission at its 2012 annual meeting.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Legislation Committee
Answers to questions on notice
Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities portfolio
Budget Estimates, May 2012

Program: Division or Agency: 1.2: Marine Initiatives and Rio+20 Taskforce **Question No:** 030

Topic: Pre-exploitation levels and percentages of Minke whales

Proof Hansard Page and Date 74

or Written Question: (22/5/12)

Senator Birmingham asked:

Senator BIRMINGHAM: I understand that the IWC Scientific Committee is trying to update this, but what is Australia's best understanding at this point in time of the pre-exploitation levels and percentages of minke whales?

Ms Petrachenko: I am going to have to take that on notice to make sure I do not misrepresent the views of the scientists. I will take it on notice and get you the exact answer.

Answer:

After further methodological development and another circumpolar survey (CPIII; 1992 to 2004) at its June 2012 meeting the International Whaling Commission's Scientific Committee agreed new abundance estimates for CPII and CPIII which were approximately 720,000 and 515,000 whales respectively.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Legislation Committee
Answers to questions on notice
Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities portfolio
Budget Estimates, May 2012

Program: Division or Agency: 1.2: SPAD **Question No:** 031

Topic: Desert Uplands bioregion

Proof Hansard Page and Date 70-71

or Written Question: (22/5/12)

Senator Waters asked:

Senator WATERS: I just have one short question. It pertains to the Desert Uplands bioregion. Given that it is, to my knowledge, the least surveyed bioregion in Queensland for flora and fauna, yet it now faces huge threats from coal and gas mining with obvious biodiversity implications, what funding will be invested by SEWPaC to support some comprehensive baseline monitoring of biodiversity? Are you the right folks to answer that?

Mr Thompson: It is the right program area in which to ask it; whether I am the right person or not is another matter. The Desert Uplands bioregion—I think that is the reference—is not one I am familiar with. What I can undertake to do is check whether we are providing any funding to any of our National Environment Research Program hubs that might be doing some work in that area, noting though that, for the most part, the investments we are making in those NERP hubs are for research rather than for baseline monitoring or long-term monitoring. But, having said that, we may be allocating some money there.

Senator WATERS: Are there any other limbs of the organisation that are responsible for doing that baseline monitoring in any bioregion but particularly this one?

Mr Thompson: There may be some activity which has spun off from the National Plan for Environmental Information, which is a portfolio initiative delivered jointly by us and the Bureau of Meteorology, but primarily the Bureau of Meteorology. Again, I would note that there is a very small amount of funding for that initiative, which is meant to seed the development of a national approach to data, environmental data in particular. Then, beyond that, there may be some funding which is provided and which is a function of the National Critical Research Infrastructure Scheme, which is actually administered by the department of industry and innovation. They have been funding the Terrestrial Ecosystem Research Network and there may be some monitoring in that quarter as well. So what I am undertaking to do is a bit of a scan for you to find out whether there is anything in that area.

Answer:

The Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (the department) is not currently funding comprehensive baseline monitoring of biodiversity across Australia's bioregions, including within the Desert Uplands bioregion in Queensland.

However, a biodiversity monitoring framework developed specifically for the Australian rangelands is currently being trialled through the Australian Collaborative Rangelands Information System (ACRIS), a partnership between the Australian Government and agencies responsible for natural resource management and biodiversity conservation in Western Australia, South Australia, the Northern Territory, Queensland and New South Wales. The trial will focus on monitoring target species and broader systematic surveillance monitoring at landscape scale, which in Queensland will take place in the Mulga Lands Bioregion. The completion of this trial will inform future on-going monitoring of biodiversity in the rangelands at a scale that is relevant to National, State and regional jurisdictions.

In relation to vegetation extent and distribution, the department manages a comprehensive data system that provides information on vegetation types across Australian landscapes. The National Vegetation Information System (NVIS) incorporates vegetation information from State and Territory vegetation agencies into a national database. The Queensland Herbarium provides regional ecosystem mapping that covers much of the State, including the Desert Uplands bioregion. Regional ecosystem mapping currently includes pre-clearing and remnant vegetation information at one or two year intervals between 1997 and 2006.

The AusPlots–Rangelands facility of the Terrestrial Ecosystem Research Network is an Australian Government initiative being conducted as part of the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy. The facility will establish a network of permanent scientific reference plots across Australia's rangelands which will be surveyed for vegetation, soil and fauna. The work program for Queensland is yet to be finalised, however the initiative will build on and enhance previous monitoring by State and Territory governments and pre-existing inter-jurisdictional collaborations, such as the ACRIS. AusPlots–Rangelands is also being undertaken in partnership with other biodiversity survey programs, including Bush Blitz, which is managed by the department.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Legislation Committee
Answers to questions on notice
Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities portfolio
Budget Estimates, May 2012

Program: Division or Agency: 1.2: SPAD **Question No:** 032

Topic: 2011 State of the Environment report
- distribution

Proof Hansard Page and Date 75

or Written Question: (22/5/12)

Senator Birmingham asked:

Senator BIRMINGHAM: Where, to whom, and how was the full report distributed?

Mr Richardson: There were obviously copies for tabling, and that was the reason why we needed to print copies of the full report. The majority of the reports that have been provided to date have been provided to academic institutions, libraries. They are available on request but they obviously have to last us for five years until the next report is printed, so we have been careful about how many have been let out the door.

Senator BIRMINGHAM: How many have been let out the door?

Mr McNee: I am not sure we have the numbers for that at this stage. We will have to take it on notice.

Answer:

3,500 copies of *Australia State of the Environment 2011* were printed. 12,000 printed copies of *Australia State of the Environment 2011 – In Brief* were printed.

As at 21 May 2012, 1,001 copies of *Australia State of the Environment 2011* and 2,438 copies of *Australia State of the Environment 2011 – In Brief* had been distributed.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Legislation Committee
Answers to questions on notice
Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities portfolio
Budget Estimates, May 2012

Program: Division or Agency: 1.2: SPAD **Question No:** 033

Topic: 2006 State of the Environment report

Proof Hansard Page and Date 76

or Written Question: (22/5/12)

Senator Birmingham asked:

Senator BIRMINGHAM: Did you have many of the 2006 report left?

Mr Richardson: The 2006 report was quite a small report. We do still have some copies of that left, and I will have to take on notice the print run.

Answer:

As at 12 June 2012, 128 copies of Australia State of the Environment 2006 remain from the original print run of 3,000 and are still available for distribution.

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Legislation Committee**
Answers to questions on notice
Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities portfolio
Budget Estimates, May 2012

Program: Division or Agency: 1.2: SPAD **Question No:** 034

Topic: NERP funding

Proof Hansard Page and Date Written

or Written Question:

Senator McKenzie asked:

1. At what locations are the researchers supported under the NERP funding program located?

Answer:

- There are over 350 researchers who receive funding through the National Environmental Research Program (NERP) hubs, and they are based at a variety of research institutions spread across many locations around Australia. The Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (the department) does not maintain a register of the location of individual researchers participating in the program. The location of the 5 host organisation NERP research Hubs are:
 - Environmental Decisions - Host Organisation: University of Queensland, Saint Lucia (Brisbane), Queensland;
 - Landscapes and Policy Hub - Host organisation: University of Tasmania, Hobart, Tasmania;
 - Northern Australia Hub - Host organisation: Charles Darwin University, Casuarina (Darwin), Northern Territory;
 - Marine Biodiversity Hub Host organisation: University of Tasmania, Hobart, Tasmania; and
 - Tropical Ecosystems Hub - Administrator: Reef and Rainforest Research Centre, Cairns Queensland.
- Each of these NERP Hubs has prepared a Multi-Year Research Plan which contains information on the research projects being pursued under the Hubs, including information about the researchers involved in the projects (see www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/science/nerp/publications/index.html).