2. Importance of satellite telemetry in polar bear management and conservation

The IUCN Polar Bear Specialist Group

Recognizing that the loss of sea ice due to climate change is resulting in changes in polar bear distribution and habitat use; and

Recognizing that satellite telemetry data are a key tool used to understand habitat use and movements of polar bears; and

Recognizing that in some jurisdictions satellite telemetry data are no longer being collected; and

Recognizing that these data are critical to management and conservation actions, including designing effective studies, estimating demographic parameters, apportioning harvest, designating protected areas, improving public safety, mitigating effects of industrial development, forecasting future subpopulation status, and complying with national and international acts and agreements; and

Recognizing that the absence of satellite telemetry data can result in increased bias and uncertainty in ecological and demographic parameters and the delineation of subpopulation boundaries, which has a range of negative consequences for management, including increased potential for unsustainable harvest; and

Recognizing that aerial surveys are insufficient for studying polar bear movements and distribution changes, and that abundance estimates cannot be effectively compared to previous or future abundance estimates without information on movements and distribution changes; therefore

Encourages management authorities to discuss the importance of satellite telemetry data with local communities and support the collection of satellite telemetry data where needed for optimal management.