

IWC Conservation Management Plan for the Southern Right Whale Southwest Atlantic Population Workshop

Buenos Aires, 23 – 24 April 2013

1. Welcome

The workshop was officially opened by Victor Marzari, IWC Alternate Commissioner of Argentina, who welcomed the participants and thanked the range states for their commitment in facing the challenge of elaborating and implementing a Conservation Management Plan for the Southern right whale Southwest Atlantic population (SRW SAP).

Meeting attendees included representatives from the following CMP range states: Argentina, Chile and Uruguay with apologies from Brazil. Lorenzo Rojas Bracho attended in his capacity as IWC Conservation Committee Chair and Chris Schweizer was present on behalf of Donna Petrachenko, IWC CMP Standing Working Group Chair (list of participants at Annex A). Greg Donovan, IWC Head of Science and Toshihide Kitakado, IWC Scientific Committee Chair were apologies.

Funding support for the meeting provided by the IWC Voluntary Fund for CMPs and the Argentinean Government was noted with thanks.

2. Appointment of Chair and Rapporteurs

Miguel Iñíguez Bessega was elected Chair. Carolina Cassani was appointed rapporteur.

3. Review and adoption of Agenda

The Chair welcomed the participants to the workshop and the agenda was adopted (at Annex B).

Following the recommendations of the IWC and particularly considering the SRW die-off event in Península Valdés area, a Conservation Management Plan (CMP) drafted by Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Uruguay was endorsed by IWC64 (document IWC/64/CC7 Rev.1 refers).

The following nine high priority actions were originally identified for the CMP:

- i. implementation of the CMP;
- ii. development of a strategy to increase public awareness and build capacity in range states;
- iii. determination of movements, migration routes and location of feeding ground(s) through satellite telemetry;
- iv. development of a GIS database on information on human activities that might have an adverse impact on whales;
- v. ensuring long-term monitoring of abundance, trends and biological parameters through photo-identification and biopsy sampling;
- vi. enhancing the existing stranding networks including the capacity for undertaking post-mortems;
- vii. development of a regional entanglement response strategy;
- viii. development and implementation of a strategy to minimise kelp gull harassment; and
- ix. establishment of an expert advisory panel.

4. Workshop details

a. background and overall objective

The Southern Right Whale (SRW) is classified by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as of “Least Concern”. This species was seriously depleted by the whaling industry and even though it was protected since 1935, illegal hunting from the Soviet Union fleet from the 1950s to 1970s delayed any recovery. Even though part of the South Atlantic population is increasing at around 7% annually, the survival and recovery of SRW SAP depends on prompt and effective conservation action throughout their range.

The IWC agreed to nominate the SRW SAP for a Conservation management Plan (SWA SRW CMP) (IWC/63/CC4). A workshop to begin the development of the SWA SRW CMP was held in Buenos Aires, Argentina from 19 – 20 September 2011. Three documents were considered by the SRW CMP workshop: (i) Report of the Southern Right Whale Die-Off Workshop (IWC, 2011), (ii) Draft Proposal for an Action Plan for the Recovery of Eastern South Pacific Southern Right Whales in Chile (IWC/63/CC21Rev) and (iii) Conclusions and outcomes of the IWC Southern Right Whale Assessment workshop that was held in Buenos Aires from 13 to 16 September 2011.

The overall objective of the CMP is to protect SRW habitat and minimise anthropogenic threats to maximise the likelihood that SRW will recover to healthy levels and recolonise their historical range.

b. Workshop objectives and outputs

The objectives of the workshop are:

- to revise the CMP in order to keep it dynamic and updated
- to appoint a Coordinator for the CMP
- to finalise the Steering Committee
- to consider the need for range state Sub-coordinators

A report of this workshop will be considered by the IWC CMP Standing Working Group, referred to the IWC Scientific and Conservation Committees and presented to IWC 65 2014.

5. Priorities (based on IWC/64/CC7 Rev1)

The present status of the SRW SAP and the threats they face were summarized using the information available on the document IWC/64/CC7 Rev.1. At IWC64 Scientific Committee meeting (IWC SC Report 2012, Annex F, page 21) it was reported that the annual increase rate for the Península Valdés population was an estimated 5.1% (IWC/64/CC7 Rev. 1 had reported an annual increase rate of 7%). Cooke *et all* will present an accurate estimation at IWC SC 2013.

For the CMP, short term will be considered 1 year, mid-term 3 years and long term 5 years.

The workshop agreed that standard international protocols would be followed in delivering the actions under the CMP. Similarly, data sharing protocols would follow IWC standards.

The workshop revised the actions detailed in IWC/64/CC7 Rev. 1 and agreed the following:

PACB-01 develop a strategy to increase public awareness and build capacity in range states

(This action will be divided into two)

PACB-01: develop a strategy to increase public awareness

(in order to make the plan and its implementation known to the general public and increase their participation).

	WHAT	WHO	WHEN
(1)	Preparation for a small expert workshop to develop a strategy for the public awareness effort	StC, Coordinator	November 2013
(2)	Hold workshop	Identified participants (see methods below)	March 2014
(3)	Implement strategy and actions agreed by workshop following a timeline established by the workshop (probably a staged process)	Workshop, Coordinator, Stakeholders, StC	To be determined after 2014

StC = CMP Steering Committee

PACB-02: build capacity in range states in order to strengthen management systems

	WHAT	WHO	WHEN
(1)	Strengthen network connections between government agencies, civil society and scientific institutions in relation to the CMP.	StC, Coordinator	November 2013
(2)	To present SRW SAP CMP to local and national authorities and supranational organizations (MERCOSUR, UNASUR)	Foreign Affairs Ministries	After IWC SC 2013

SC = Scientific Committee

RES-01: determine movements, migration routes and location of feeding ground(s)

(Use all available non lethal techniques in an integrated way –e.g. satellite telemetry, photo-identification and passive acoustics)

	WHAT	WHO	WHEN
(1)	Preparation of detailed programs for satellite telemetry (including sample sizes, timing and choice of field area), photo identification catalogue and passive acoustics	Coordinator, StC, AP, relevant regional scientists, IWC-SC	IWC SC 2013
(2)	Determine budget and seek funds	Coordinator and identified scientists	IWC SC 2013 and beyond
(3)	Implement field programme	Identified scientists	To be determined
(4)	Request IWC to provide all SRW pictures available from Antarctic surveys	Identified scientists	IWC SC 2014
(5)	Training for regional scientists on non-lethal techniques	Identified scientists	To be determined
(6)	Development of a new SORP project proposal to study the migratory routes of big whales in Antarctic Peninsula	Coordinator, StC, AP, relevant regional scientists, SORP SC	September 2013 (in order to be included in 2013-2014 campaign)

AP = Advisory Panel; SORP SC: Southern Ocean Research Partnership Steering Committee

A detailed report of available satellite telemetry equipment was provided at the SORP Symposium in Chile (document available at www.simposioballenas.cl). It was reported that some local scientists oppose the use of invasive methods. However, the workshop noted the challenges of accomplishing the objectives of RES-01 without the use of satellite technology and that there is less invasive satellite telemetry equipment available today (e.g. limpet tags).

RES-02: development of a GIS [meta] database on information on human activities that might have an adverse impact on whales

	WHAT	WHO	WHEN
(1)	Preparation of a proposal of the structure and content of a GIS database (or metadatabase) based on (1)	Stakeholders, StC, Coordinator, IWC-SC	March 2014
(2)	Identification of funds and contractor for database development and population	Workshop, Coordinator, Stakeholders, StC	March 2014
(3)	Recompilation of existing sources of information on human activities (e.g. fishing, shipping, seismic exploration, gas and oil exploitation, and development information)	Stakeholders, StC, Coordinator	September 2014
(4)	Compile a SRW Sensitivity Atlas	Contractor, Coordinator, StC	December 2014

The contractor will design the template to collect and present the relevant information. Each CMP range state should get and compile the available information for its territory. The GIS data base needs to be periodically updated. According to the outcomes of the Sensitivity Atlas (*Atlas de Sensibilidad*), mitigation policies should be designed for any emerging threats.

MON-01: Ensure long-term monitoring of abundance, trends and biological parameters

(The benefits of using all available non lethal techniques in an integrated way (e.g. biopsy sampling, photo-identification and passive acoustics) were noted).

	WHAT	WHO	WHEN
(1)	Review of updated analysis that will be presented at IWC65 SC 2013 incorporating data from Argentina and Brazil	Cooke and colleagues, IWC-SC	IWC SC 2013
(2)	Power analyses to confirm necessary levels of effort to ensure that important trends can be detected	Cooke and colleagues, IWC-SC	IWC SC 2013 or later
(3)	Necessary fieldwork in the light of (2)	Scientists	Continuing
(4)	Consideration of most appropriate way to store and share data (including consideration of single catalogue and a single biopsy sample repository organisation)	Coordinator, StC, AP, IWC-SC, Relevant Regional Scientists	Continuing
(5)	Ensure adequate long-term funding	Range states, Coordinator, StC	Continuing

The workshop agreed on the importance of sharing all the available information on this species in the Southern Hemisphere. The Steering Committee tasked the Coordinator to contact Peter Best to access data from the ‘Southern Ocean Right Whale Photo-identification Catalogue’.

The workshop also highlighted the potential use of acoustic devices to estimate population trends.

MON-02: enhance existing strandings networks including the capacity for undertaking post-mortems

	WHAT	WHO	WHEN
(1)	Review latest work on post-mortem examination techniques relevant to ship strikes, entanglement and the main hypotheses for the die-off (IWC, 2011)	IWC-SC	IWC SC 2013
(2)	Consider whether there is a need to update protocols or in other ways	Relevant regional scientists and other experts	IWC SC 2013 and beyond
(3)	Refine protocols for tissue storage and analyses following recommendations in IWC (2011)	Relevant regional scientists and other experts	
(4)	Enhance the logistical capacity of the Southern Right Whale Health Monitoring Program and other networks, including provision of equipment, following the recommendations in IWC (2011) if not already done	Range states, Coordinator, relevant regional experts	As soon as possible
(5)	Ensure adequate long-term funding	Range states, Coordinator, StC	Continuing

Results of the die-off events in Península Valdés will be presented by the SRW Health Monitoring Program at the 44th Annual Meeting of the International Association of Aquatic Animals Medicine in Sausalito, USA on April 21 to 26, 2013.

The workshop noted the need for better access to skilled pathologists to support this action. The Steering Committee tasked the Coordinator to explore whether the IWC’s Standing Working Group on Environmental Concerns could provide support in this area.

MIT-01: development of a regional entanglement response strategy

In 2011 the IWC63 agreed that David Mattila –International expert on disentangling of big whales and member of IWC Secretariat– would conduct disentangling workshops, starting in Argentina and Brazil. The workshops took place in 2012 in both countries and were followed by training for 2 Brazilian and 2 Argentinean experts at the Center for Coastal Research in Cape Code, USA.

While reports of entanglement in the region are low, the range states are concerned that entanglements might be underreported. Given the range of threats that SRW face, work on prevention measures is required.

It was agreed to develop a joint regional entanglement response strategy through a workshop. The range states also agreed to produce public information materials (e.g. posters) on entanglements. This information can be delivered and displayed in coastal institutions and it should also include a list of contact organizations.

	WHAT	WHO	WHEN
(1)	Conduct disentangling training workshops in Argentina and Brazil	David Mattila, IWC Delegates from Argentina and Brazil, stakeholders	March 2012
(2)	Arrange for apprenticeships for selected candidates at existing centres of excellence for entanglement response	Coordinator, range states, AP	September 2012 and May 2013
(3)	Review progress and determine need for further training in entanglement response	Range state representatives, AP	IWC SC 2013
(4)	Develop information materials for fishermen and ocean users in conjunction with IWC	Coordinator, relevant experts, AP	March 2014 (workshop)
(5)	Determine data collection and reporting mechanism for entanglements (at sea and stranded animals) in conjunction with the proposed IWC database	Coordinator, relevant experts, IWC-SC	March 2014 (above workshop)
(6)	Finalise a region-wide strategy for entanglement response	Coordinator, relevant experts, AP	March 2014 (above workshop)

MIT-02: develop and implement a strategy to minimize kelp gull harassment

	WHAT	WHO	WHEN
(1)	Hold workshop to (a) review previous work and recommendations (including local workshops in 2004 and 2008 as well as IWC, 2011 and 2012); (b) develop a pragmatic, costed mitigation strategy to address this issue, especially but not exclusively for Argentina; (c) develop a disease sampling programme for gulls.	Coordinator, StC, relevant experts, local authorities	To be determined by Coordinator and Steering Group before IWC 65
(2)	Implement the strategy developed at the above workshop	To be determined by workshop	As soon as possible
(3)	Continue to monitor the frequency of gull attacks (in the field and through examination of photographs) throughout the range and exchange information to enable determination of whether developed strategy is successful when implemented	Relevant regional scientists	Long-term

Argentina reported on the progress of the pilot project to mitigate the harassment of kelp gull on SRWs. The Province of Chubut together with a group of specialists is working on this complex issue. Chubut advised that the pilot project must run for at least one year in order to be able to evaluate its results. As a first step,

Chubut is working to eradicate the open waste disposal areas that are considered one of the causes of this problem.

In 2012, Chubut asked for an evaluation workshop to assess techniques, results and possible pathologies that could be transmitted by the gulls. The Steering Committee agreed to support the workshop and to request Chubut to report regularly to the Coordinator on progress with the pilot project.

The Steering Committee also noted the related work of the Southern Right Whale Health Monitoring Program in Península Valdés area and agreed that it should continue to be supported.

The Steering Committee noted that the kelp gull issue may be a broad public health topic, and not just a matter relating to the health of the SRW SAP. It recommended it be considered in this broader context at the upcoming workshop.

MIT-03: establishment of an expert advisory panel

	WHAT	WHO	WHEN
(1)	To identify and establish an advisory panel and its modus operandi	Coordinator, IWC-SC	June 2013
(2)	To nominate 2 specialists per country	Range states	September 2013
(3)	To invite the IWC SC to nominate 2 representatives	IWC-SC	June 2013

This workshop agreed to establish an Advisory Panel, with the following terms of reference:

- The Panel will be established by the Steering Committee
- Members of the Panel serve in their individual capacity as experts and not as representatives of governments or organisations.
- The Panel will consist of a core group of no more than 10 scientists (2 nominated by each range state + 2 IWC Scientific Committee representatives). Members will serve for a maximum period of 5 years.
- Its primary role is to assist the Steering Committee to address scientific and technical issues as requested.
- The Panel will identify additional expertise as required.

The Steering Committee added the following action to the CMP:

MIT-04: develop mitigation actions to address major threats identified through the Sensitivity Atlas

	WHAT	WHO	WHEN
(1)	Identify and recommend mitigation measures to range states	Coordinator, StC, AP	Ongoing
(2)	Track progress in delivering mitigation measures	Coordinator, StC	Ongoing

6. Appointment of Steering Committee, Coordinator and Sub-coordinators

Steering Committee

The Interim Steering Committee proposed the following terms of reference:

1. Constituted by government representatives from the range states and by representatives from the IWC (Head of Science, the Chairs of the IWC Scientific and Conservation Committees and the Chair of the IWC SWG CMP).
2. The Steering Committee can invite observers to attend its meetings.
3. The Coordinator is an *ex-officio* member of the Committee.
4. A Chair will be selected by the members for each meeting.
5. Members serve for the duration of the CMP unless replaced by the nominating parties.
6. Provide a focus to, and monitor the delivery of, the CMP.
7. Provide guidance to, and encourage conservation actions by, the range states.
8. Report and respond, as appropriate, to requests from range states, IWC and other international fora regarding the CMP.
9. Facilitate the exchange and sharing of information.
10. Report to the IWC through the Conservation Committee.
11. Oversight the work program of the Coordinator.
12. Manage any funding provided by the IWC to implement the CMP.

The Steering Committee government representatives were confirmed as follows:

- Argentina: Miguel Iñíguez Bessega, Nadia Boscarol, María Laura Tombesi
- Brazil: to be confirmed
- Chile: Barbara Galletti Vernazzani.
- Uruguay: Alberto Ponce de León, Alfredo Le Bas, Daniel Gilardoni

The Steering Committee then confirmed its terms of reference.

Coordinator

Lorenzo Rojas Bracho nominated Miguel Iñíguez Bessega for the position of Coordinator. The nomination was unanimously accepted by the workshop. Iñíguez accepted the nomination and noted the huge challenge that it involves.

As a result of Iñíguez' appointment as Coordinator he was replaced as an Argentinean range state member on the Steering Committee by Víctor Marzari.

The Steering Committee considered that on the basis of the task description for the Coordinator (ICW/64/CC7 Rev. 1 pages 18 and 19), the position was equivalent to 60% of a full-time position. Noting that compensation for similar international coordination positions in the region range between USD 2000 and USD 4000 per month, the Steering Committee decided that the Coordinator position should be recompensed for a period of 18 months (starting at 1/May/2013) at a level of USD 3000 (approx. GBP 2000) per month.

The IWC approved funding of GBP 50.000 to support the delivery of the SRW SAP CMP. The Steering Committee decided to allocate these funds as follows:

- Compensation for the coordinator: GBP 36.000 for a 18 months period
- Travel budget and meetings for the Steering Committee: GBP 14.000

The Coordinator was tasked with preparing a detailed budget with the expenditures already made and future expenses. The budget will be approved by the Steering Committee.

The Steering Committee agreed they would review the appropriateness of the task description and the accompanying compensation at the end of 12 months (May 2014).

Sub-coordinators

It was agreed that each range state will decide, on the need for, and whether or not to appoint a national Sub-Coordinator.

Argentina appointed Antonio De Nichilo as a Sub-coordinator.

7. Adoption of Report

Votes of thanks to Argentina for hosting, organizing and supporting the workshop, and providing both the Chair and the rapporteur, were supported by all workshop participants.

Thanks were also given to the Argentinean Coast Guard for the opportunity to visit the Oceanographic Motor Vessel 'Dr. Bernardo Houssay', and for the warm reception.

The workshop report was adopted on the 24th of April at 16:35 hours.

List of Annexes:

ANNEX A: List of participants

ANNEX B: Agenda

ANNEX A: List of Participants

Argentina

Susana Ruiz Cerutti – IWC Commissioner

Víctor Marzari – IWC Alternate Commissioner

Miguel Iñíguez Bessega – IWC Alternate Commissioner

Antonio De Nichilo – Argentinean Environmental Secretariat, Aquatic Resources

Nadia Boscarol – Argentinean Environmental Secretariat, Aquatic Resources

María Laura Tombesi – Argentinean Environmental Secretariat, Aquatic Resources

Carolina Cassani – Rapporteur

Australia

Chris Schweizer – IWC Alternate Commissioner (on behalf of Donna Petrachenko, IWC Commissioner)

Fernando Perez Tain – Australian Embassy in Buenos Aires

Chile

Barbara Galletti Vernazzani – IWC Scientific Advisor

Mexico

Lorenzo Rojas Bracho – Chair of IWC Conservation Committee

Uruguay

Alberto Ponce de León – Uruguayan National Direction of Aquatic Resources

ANNEX B: Agenda

IWC Conservation Management Plan for the Southern right whale Southwest Atlantic population

Palacio San Martín
Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y Culto
Salón Cedro, Casa 2
Arenales 761, Buenos Aires, Argentina
23 and 24 April 2013
9am start

1. Welcome
2. Appointment of Chair and Rapporteurs
3. Review and adoption of Agenda
4. Workshop details
 - a. What is CMP?
 - b. Workshop objectives and outputs
5. Priorities (based on IWC/64/CC7 Rev1)
 - a. Define short term priorities
 - b. Define medium term priorities
6. Appointment of Steering Committee, Coordinator and Subcoordinators
7. Adoption of Report