

# SC/68B/HIM/15

---

## Summary of WWFs Review of Shipping and Cetaceans, and request for IWC technical input and support

Gianna Minton on behalf of WWF



INTERNATIONAL  
WHALING COMMISSION

# **Summary of WWF's Review of Shipping and Cetaceans, and request for IWC technical input and support**

Gianna Minton (on behalf of WWF)

## **Summary:**

WWF has commissioned a global review, titled 'Shipping and cetaceans: A review of impacts and mitigation options for policy makers and other stakeholders.' This Review summarises information on the impacts of ship strikes and shipping-generated underwater noise on cetaceans, describes mitigation measures available and in use, and based on these, makes recommendations for best practice. It is intended for use by WWF offices around the globe, other NGOs, IGOs, and shipping regulators and policy makers. The report is in near-final draft stage but would benefit from the inclusion of one additional case study illustrating the implementation and evaluation of underwater noise mitigation measures. WWF is seeking engagement from the IWC Scientific Committee to review the report to ensure the topic is represented accurately and to recommend an additional case study for inclusion. Once finalised, WWF invites the IWC to use this report to support its own recommendations for mitigating shipping impacts on cetaceans and for the implementation of its strategic plan on mitigation of ship strikes and its developing programme on underwater noise.

## **Background and context**

Through its Marine Cetacean Initiative the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) strives to collaborate with other conservation partners to address three main areas of conservation concern for cetaceans: identifying and protecting critical cetacean habitat; monitoring and mitigating bycatch; and reducing the impacts of shipping on cetaceans, with a focus on ship strikes and underwater noise. In this context, WWF has commissioned a number of studies intended to provide knowledge products that can be used by WWF offices around the globe as well as other NGOs and IGOs in efforts to engage policy makers, industry and other stakeholders that have the ability to implement change to benefit cetaceans. As part of this effort, WWF Canada engaged a consultancy to review the impacts of shipping on cetaceans, focusing on ship strikes and underwater noise, and compile examples of mitigation from around the world to understand processes, challenges and effectiveness of different tools. The terms of reference for this review were shared with the IWC Ship Strikes Working Group in 2019 for their input and later for circulation, with the intention of ensuring that the review would complement the IWC's Strategic Plan to Mitigate the Impacts of Ship Strikes on Cetacean Populations: 2017-2020 (Cates et al., 2017).

## **Summary of report contents and approach**

The report is currently just over 50 pages long and will likely be longer once the final formatting and layout has been completed by a professional designer. The language of the report is intended to be accessible to readers without a scientific background but includes over 200 numbered citations of peer reviewed literature and other sources to provide robust underpinnings for the information that is presented. The report will be supported by a 2-page 'fact sheet' that includes the main conclusions and recommendations for use in outreach and awareness-raising. The full report will be ready for review the end of May, and includes the following sections and content:

1. A summary of the main issues and impacts to cetaceans associated with shipping, with a focus on ship strikes and underwater noise. This includes simple, but scientifically referenced explanations of what the impacts are, as well as a summary of global ‘hotspots’ where shipping and cetacean populations overlap, based on the IWC Strategic Plan (Cates et al., 2017) and other reviews conducted by WWF. This introductory section also includes a summary of the different frameworks in place for action to mitigate impacts – international (IMO, IWC, CMS), regional (EU, OSPAR, ACCOBAMS, ASCOBANS etc), National (national government agencies), and industry-based (port-led incentives, industry certification schemes, etc.).
2. A summary of measures that can be used to monitor, mitigate and manage ship strike risks and shipping-generated underwater noise. This includes summaries of methods used to monitor cetacean distribution and behaviour in relation to shipping, as well as place-based, technical and operational measures that can be used to reduce the risk of ship strikes and the impacts of underwater noise on cetaceans.
3. Case studies illustrating the implementation and evaluation of mitigation measures to reduce ship strikes and underwater noise: Currently, these include:
  - North Atlantic right whales on the Stellwagen Bank,
  - blue whales in the Santa Barbara Channel, and
  - resident killer whales in the Pacific Northwest.

WWF would like to include a fourth case study from outside North America.. In addition to providing information on the context, impacts monitoring and mitigation measures used in each site, these case studies also aim to draw out ‘lessons learned’ and the ‘human’ side of mitigation, including the stakeholder collaboration required for effective management.

4. Conclusions and recommendations: A final section reviewing what has been learned from the literature and case studies and making recommendations to mitigate ship strikes and underwater noise impacts on cetaceans.

### **Request to the IWC Scientific Committee**

In order to make this report as effective a tool as possible, for WWF and for other bodies engaged in work with stakeholders to reduce the impacts of shipping to cetaceans, WWF is seeking the following from the IWC Scientific Committee:

1. Suggestions for a fourth case study to feature in the report highlighting lessons learned from implementation of measures to reduce underwater noise (possibly in conjunction with reduction of ship strike risk). This case study should be based outside of North America to provide a more global view.
2. A review of the report to ensure the topic is represented accurately from a scientific point of view, while maintaining a style that is more accessible to non-scientists. This could be conducted by a small intersessional group in the weeks following the Scientific Committee meeting.
3. Suggestions for how such a report could be used by the IWC in engaging policy makers and other stakeholders, and possibly for assisting with implementation of the next phase of its Strategic Plan to Mitigate the Impacts of Ship Strikes on Cetacean Populations and its developing programme on underwater noise.

**References:**

Cates, K., D. P. DeMaster, R. L. Brownell Jr, G. K. Silber, S. Gende, R. Leaper, F. Ritter, and S. Panigada. 2017. Strategic Plan to Mitigate the Impacts of Ship Strikes on Cetacean Populations: 2017-2020, International Whaling Commission, Cambridge, United Kingdom.