

SC/68B/HIM/13

Progression of IWC Work on Ship Strikes

Chair of the Ship Strikes Working Group, Convenor of
HIM and the IWC Secretariat



INTERNATIONAL
WHALING COMMISSION

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CONVENORS OF THE HIM SUB- COMMITTEE OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE AND IWC
SECRETARIAT

ABSTRACT

This paper provides initial proposals for progression of IWC work on ship strikes and invites comments from the Scientific Committee. Following this, the Conservation Committee Ship Strikes Working Group and Convenor of HIM will refine these proposals and submit to the Commission for endorsement at IWC68. Given that there are (at the time of writing this paper) uncertainties about the timing of IWC68 there is a need to retain flexibility in terms of the timeline.

BACKGROUND

The IWC has identified the need to address the effects of ship strikes on cetacean populations, and especially large whale populations, as a conservation concern worldwide. Both the Conservation and Scientific Committees of the IWC are working to understand and reduce the threat posed by ship strikes. The Conservation Committee progresses its work through its Working Group on Ship Strikes and the Scientific Committee workplan is progressed by its Sub-committee on Non-deliberate Human Induced Mortality (HIM), the ship strikes database coordinators currently under contract to the IWC, and with the support of other individuals such as Leaper, Convenor of HIM. The Secretariat (including the Human Impacts Technical Advisor) supports work across both Committees, particularly in support of the database and co-operation with other organisations.

Ship Strikes strategic plan and workplan

The IWC Strategic Plan (2017-2020) to Mitigate the Impacts of Ship Strikes aims to develop approaches and solutions to achieve a permanent reduction in ship strikes. Its main strategic objectives include:

1. To reduce mortalities and injuries to large whales resulting from ship strikes.
2. Increase the application of measures that reduce collision probability, such as re-routing and speed reduction/limits on a global scale.
3. Improve reporting of incidents that do occur to the IWC Ship Strike Database.
4. Increase development/use of avoidance technologies and push for their widespread standardized use where appropriate.
5. Improve collaboration on ship strike issues internationally (e.g. International Maritime Organization (IMO), other IGOs (ACCOBAMS, ASCOBANS), NGOs, Arctic Council).
6. Increase public and industry awareness about the issue and measures used to reduce this threat.

Given that the current Strategic Plan expires in 2020, it is proposed that the existing Strategic Plan be retained, considering relevant discussion by SC, with its timeline extended for two more years and that any revisions to the Strategic Plan be presented for endorsement of the Commission at IWC70 (or a suitable future date.) The current Ship Strikes Workplan underpins the Strategic Plan and development of a new workplan for 2020-2022 is underway (see below).

Ship strikes database

Since 2007 the IWC has been developing a global database of collisions between ships and whales. The ongoing development of the IWC Ship Strike Database requires data gathering, communication with potential data providers and data/database validation and management. The objectives of this database are to:

- (1) contribute to a better understanding of the scale of the problem and the factors that relate to risk (such as vessel type and speed);
- (2) estimate ship strike mortalities for different whale populations; and
- (3) identify High Risk Areas and inform mitigation measures.

The database went online in 2009 and the total number of records in the database is around 1,600 (as of May 2020). All new entries are verified and categorised by the current IWC Ship Strike Data Review Group. Since 2013, two dedicated data coordinators have been contracted by the IWC to cross-check and verify the data entries and thereby enhance the quality of the database, as specified by the Scientific Committee.

SHIP STRIKES WORKPLAN 2020-2022

A new Ship Strikes workplan 2020-2022 is being developed by the Conservation Committee Ship Strikes Working Group (Ship Strikes WG) and a current draft is provided as a separate Working Paper. This sets out priority activities in support of the objectives of the strategic plan, establishes timelines, and proposes roles and responsibilities. The draft plan allocates responsibilities to existing IWC bodies, in addition to the proposed new Ship Strikes Co-ordinator and Expert Panel (below).

The workplan will be further developed by the Ship Strikes WG on the basis of comments from the Scientific Committee and other stakeholders and will be presented to the Commission at IWC68.

PROPOSED STRUCTURE FOR IWC PROGRESS ON THE WORKPLAN 2020-22

The proposed structure for supporting IWC work on ship strikes is outlined below

1. A Ship Strikes Working Group, reporting to the Conservation Committee and Commission, that is tasked with developing a work programme and overseeing the work conducted, in close collaboration with the proposed Ship Strikes Coordinator. Current terms of reference of the WG would be reviewed as needed in light of the establishment of the proposed Coordinator post and Expert Panel.
2. An Expert Panel – established by the Ship Strikes WG in consultation with the Scientific Committee, which will report to the WG and SC.
3. The Scientific Committee, including its HIM subcommittee which would continue to implement an SC work programme relevant to ship strikes.
4. A Co-ordinator within the secretariat of IWC who, in consultation with the Ship Strikes WG, Scientific Committee and Expert Panel, will implement the programme of work including liaison with other organisations such as IMO.

IWC Ship Strikes Co-ordinator

The new Ship Strikes workplan presents an ambitious body of work for which effective implementation would be aided significantly by a dedicated Co-ordinator attached to the Secretariat to implement the programme of work and represent the IWC. A dedicated staff member focussing on ship-strikes will be able to develop the necessary expertise across all aspects of the issue. The detailed job description for the Co-ordinator will be developed by the Secretariat in consultation with the Ship Strikes WG. A summary of proposed responsibilities is set out below.

The Ship Strikes Co-ordinator, in collaboration with the IWC Ship Strikes Working Group, Scientific Committee, and Expert Panel will progress the strategic development of the Ship Strike Database and delivery of the Ship Strikes Work Programme including through:

- Co-ordinating or leading (as appropriate) implementation of all aspects of the Ship Strikes workplan identified as priorities within 2020-2022
- Support the appointment of and convene the IWC Ship Strikes Expert Panel and facilitate the provision of scientific and technical advice on Ship Strike mitigation from the panel;
- Ensure comprehensive and accurate reporting of ship strike incidents into the Ship Strike Database and take forward the workplan to continue to develop the database and ensure its use;
- Progress and strengthen engagement with other Intergovernmental Organisations and initiatives on Ship Strikes;
- Liaise with the relevant IWC committees in the development and delivery of the Ship Strikes workplan particularly the Scientific Committee and Conservation Committee;
- Provide advice to the Ship Strike WG on funding needs, and identify and (as appropriate) pursue fundraising opportunities to support delivery of the Ship Strike Strategic Plan;
- Report on the activities of the Coordinator to the SS Working Group and facilitate reporting to other relevant IWC Committees on behalf of the WG;
- Attend IWC meetings as required (including Scientific Committee and Conservation Committee meetings) and represent the IWC in other fora as needed.

The Co-ordinator position would be filled by the Secretariat through open recruitment, following the same process as for other recently appointed positions. A representative from both the WG Ship Strikes and the SC would be invited to serve on the selection panel.

It is proposed that the Co-ordinator is initially recruited as a half time position on a fixed term basis for a period of two years.

Should the Commission meeting go ahead as scheduled in September 2020 and should it endorse this proposal, recruitment of the co-ordinator position could take place in late 2020 with a view to the co-ordinator being in post early 2021. Timing would be adjusted accordingly if the Commission meeting is postponed.

The Ship Strikes Expert Panel

The detailed Terms of Reference for the Expert Panel will be developed by the Ship Strikes WG with the Chair of HIM, but its proposed responsibilities are briefly set out below.

The Expert Panel will provide scientific and technical advice to the Coordinator, Ship Strikes WG and (where requested) IWC Contracting Governments and other stakeholders in support of implementation of the Ship Strikes workplan including through:

- Supporting the development and use of the ship strikes database, including through undertaking review of database records (as per the TOR of the existing data review group)
- Collation of information on high risk populations and areas and on monitoring of impacts of measures taken
- Input of technical expertise to support development and application of mitigation measures and the review of technological approaches.
- Work with the co-ordinator, SC and others to develop tailored advice specific to different shipping sectors and related training/capacity development programmes.
- Provision of advice and support to states bringing forward mitigation proposals on stakeholder engagement, design considerations or routeing or other measures, and the requirements for proposals made to IMO

It is proposed that the Expert Panel could initially be formed from the existing Ship Strikes Data Review and Ship Routeing Groups within the Scientific Committee, but also include those with expertise on management of shipping and knowledge of the shipping industry. There will also be an aim of geographic and gender balance.

FUNDING

The full costings for implementation of the workplan, including but not limited to the cost of the co-ordinator post will be further developed and included in the final workplan submitted to IWC68.

Regarding the Co-ordinator position, it could be proposed initially that this would be funded through a modest contribution from the SC (allocated specifically for work on the ship strikes database to be undertaken by the Ship Strikes Co-ordinator) supplemented by additional voluntary contributions from Contracting Governments and other sources. Additional core support (for implementation of the Work Programme) from the Secretariat would continue to be provided through the IT team (technical support for the database), and funding needs for co-ordinator travel (where this meets existing Secretariat mandates) could potentially be met from Secretariat travel funds. Working with Secretariat colleagues, the Ship Strikes WG and others the Co-ordinator would pursue wider fundraising for the programme.

QUESTIONS FOR THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

The Scientific Committee is invited to provide any comments and in particular:

- Comments on the draft Ship Strikes workplan 2020-2022
- Comments on proposals for the Ship Strikes Co-ordinator and Expert Panel
- Comments on how to progress the work between now and the possible appointment of a coordinator

ANNEX 1 Current terms of Reference for Ship Strikes Working Group

The Ship Strike Working Group seeks to help governments to address issues relating to ship strikes and in particular its mitigation. It will do this by inter alia:

- Evaluation of the effectiveness and practical implementation of mitigation measures;
- Coordination with the Scientific Committee to ensure that new relevant information is considered and evaluated in a timely manner;
- Provision of advice to the Commission on governments' request;
- Liaison and exchange of information with other inter-governmental shipping bodies (e.g. IMO) and international IGOs (e.g. CMS and its daughter agreements such as ACCOBAMS and ASCOBANS) and NGOs with ship strike initiatives to ensure complementarity of efforts and regular exchange of information and expertise on ship strike issues;
- Increase public and industry awareness about the issue and measures used to reduce this threat