

Description of the Small Cetaceans Task Teams (SCTTs) – to be considered by the Scientific Committee at its 2021 meeting

Prepared by the SCTT Steering Committee

The SCTTs are an initiative of the Scientific Committee of the International Whaling Commission.

Initiated in 2015, the SCTT initiative is intended to provide fast response in situations where a population of cetaceans is known or suspected to be in danger of a significant decline that could ultimately lead to extirpation or extinction, with the ultimate aim of ensuring that this does not occur. Specifically, Task Teams are created to provide timely conservation advice on immediate actions to support recovery and threat abatement activities.

1. Structure

The SCTT has the following structure:

1.1 A Steering Committee which oversees the Task Teams, including providing advice and approving their structures and helping to find support for the work of the Task Teams;

1.2 The Steering Committee reports annually to IWC Scientific Committee via the Small Cetaceans Sub-Committee and also reports to the Conservation Committee;

1.3 The Steering Committee also advises on which populations may be suitable for the development of new Task Teams and these are subject to the approval of the Scientific Committee; and

1.4 Each Task Team has one or more coordinators appointed by the Steering Committee and a membership proposed by the coordinator(s) which is also approved by the Steering Committee.

2. Task Team Activities

Each Task Team will:

2.1 Compile and review information about the focal population(s);

2.2 Develop a plan for priority research and conservation for the population(s) concerned and this plan is subject to review and approval by the Steering Committee;

2.3 Work with the IWC Secretariat and Steering Committee to:

2.3.1 Establish dialogue with the relevant country/countries;

2.3.2 Provide advice and assistance as proves appropriate; and

2.3.3 Obtain funding for its activities.

3. Current Task Team Activity

The Following Task Teams are currently¹ in place:

¹ The first Task Team, established in 2015, was for the Franciscana. It concluded its work in 2017 and the species now has a Conservation Management Plan in place.

3.1 South Asian River Dolphins, established in 2016, coordinators Dipani Sutaria and Nachiket Kelkar.

3.2 African Humpback dolphin Task Team, initiated in 2019, appointment of coordinators and team structures still under discussion;

3.3 Lahille's Bottlenose Dolphin Task Team, initiated in 2020, coordinators Pedro Fruet and Els Vermeulen.

4. Notes

There is no limit on the number of Task Teams that can operate simultaneously.

Conservation Management Plans (CMPs) and Task Teams can function synergistically, with a clear distinction maintained between the two: CMPs are formal, lasting agreements between governments while Task Teams are more immediate and informal initiatives led by researchers and other interested individuals.

5. Steering Committee Membership

The members and coordinator of the SCTT are appointed by the Scientific Committee.

5.1 Coordinator: Mark Simmonds.

5.2 The Chair and Co-chair of the Small Cetaceans Sub-Committee (Lindsay Porter and Fernando Trujillo) and the IWC Secretariat Science Lead (Iain Staniland).

5.3 The other members are Peter Thomas, Randy Reeves, Arne Bjørge, Chris Parsons, Tilen Genov, Lorenzo Rojas-Bracho and Greg Donovan (if available).