

Developing a handbook and strategic plan for the CMP Program

Standing Working Group on Conservation Management Plans

The Conservation Committee is invited to:

- i) Note and provide comments on the key elements of the handbook and strategic plan outlined in this paper
- ii) Note and provide feedback on the draft program handbook and strategic plan (**Attached**)
- iii) Note the ongoing CMP action plan 2018 – 2020 (**Annex A**) and the intention to update this document for IWC68 to guide implementation of the strategic plan

Background

Conservation Management Plans (CMPs) are an important conservation initiative of the International Whaling Commission (IWC), aimed at protecting and rebuilding vulnerable cetacean populations. CMPs facilitate collaboration between range states (countries with coastlines within the range of a cetacean population), and work towards the Conservation Committee's vision of *'healthy, well managed, and recovered cetacean populations worldwide.'* There are currently four established CMPs and others in various stages of development.

At IWC66, the Conservation Committee recommended that the Committee's working groups should develop thematic strategic plans and associated work plans to help drive progress forward (IWC/66/CC10). These are intended as outward facing documents that sit under and support the Conservation Committee [Strategic Plan 2016-2026](#) endorsed at IWC66.

The [CMP work plan 2014 – 2020](#) is the current guiding document for the CMP program. The focus for the Standing Working Group on Conservation Management Plans (SWG-CMP) over the intersessional period is development of a handbook and strategic plan (2021-2030) for endorsement at IWC68. This will be accompanied by a shorter-term priority action plan for the CMP program to assist in implementation of the strategic plan.

The SWG-CMP Chair is seeking views on a draft handbook and strategic plan ([attached](#)) and intends to consult widely in the lead up to IWC68 to ensure the document is fit for purpose and valuable for all CMP stakeholders. The Conservation Committee is invited to provide feedback and suggestions. Key differences to the current CMP work plan are outlined in this paper.

1. Key Elements of the Strategic Plan

Intended audience and presentation

The current CMP work plan functions as a program handbook. This element has been carried over to the strategic plan document, so that it will continue to function as the primary source of information on the CMP program. This means the intended audience is broad, as it will be provided to anyone wishing to be involved or to find out more about the program, as well as referred to by existing CMP participants. This could include range states/Contracting Governments, members of the Scientific and Conservation Committees, CMP Co-ordinators, NGOs and industry stakeholders. It could also be used to approach or engage potential funders so that they understand the governance, scope, and aims of the program.

One of the actions under the current CMP work plan is to increase promotion of the CMP program and its achievements, including through development of communication materials. As a result, a focus has been on ensuring the CMP handbook and strategic plan is professionally and visually presented.

Emphasising the CMP Partnership

Success of CMPs are dependant on all relevant stakeholders working together and communicating effectively. The handbook places emphasis on this and proposes principles for collaboration.

Building in flexibility in CMP scope/approach

Since the initiative began in 2008, CMPs have focused on conservation actions for distinct populations. However, the SWG-CMP has received feedback that many CMP actions have co-benefits for non-target populations or other cetacean species and that this should be formally recognised in CMP scope and development. In some regions, focusing on only one population may limit the potential of the CMP and interest from governments. The updated handbook element of the document has built in a flexible approach to CMP development that acknowledges there is no 'one size fits all' model for CMPs. Providing they are science-driven, examples could include:

- Range states working together to better understand and monitor all of their shared cetacean populations, including through data sharing.
- Range states working together to address common threats to several cetacean populations in their region (i.e. shipping corridors, bycatch).
- Regional neighbours working together to better understand and protect shared species, even if populations are not shared. This could include sharing resources, capacity building, workshops, and policies. This is important as some cetacean species and populations inhabit fragmented landscapes (i.e. river systems) or have disrupted migratory routes (due to threats).
- Range states working together to protect a shared population (as per current approach).

This represents a change in program definition/scope and requires consultation with the Conservation Committee, Scientific Committee and endorsement by the Commission. If agreed, this will require an update to the CMP nomination and development templates – to be completed and consulted on in the coming months.

Funding

Historically, CMP development and actions have been funded in part through proposals to the Voluntary Conservation Fund (VCF) and the Scientific Committee's research fund (for relevant research projects, workshops etc). Other sources of funding include range state governments, NGO donations, and conservation grants.

While the SWG-CMP hopes that IWC voluntary contributions continue to be available, it is important to ensure that the CMP program continues to be sustainable despite inevitable fluctuations in IWC funding, and that CMPs maintain momentum when IWC funded CMP projects or actions conclude. This is particularly important to consider given the current global economic situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Range states have always been encouraged to self-fund CMPs or seek external funding, before or instead of seeking IWC funding. This helps to ensure that full ownership and responsibility for the CMP

by the range states is established. The updated handbook specifies that when range states are interested in developing or participating in a CMP, the expectation is that government funding will be provided to support implementation. It also states that availability of funding should be considered as a factor influencing Commission endorsement.

Government funding could be supplemented by industry support, NGO support, university or research institution support, and environment conservation grants, or collaboration with other international agreements such as the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS). The SWG-CMP and IWC Secretariat are investigating ways to attract funding for the CMP program, including from external stakeholders and can provide fundraising support to CMP co-ordinators.

Strategic objectives

Three strategic objectives have been put forward for consideration:

1. Improve financial self-sufficiency of CMPS and recognition of the CMP program
- 2: Strengthen CMP partnerships to achieve results
- 3: Improve monitoring and evaluation of the CMP program and conservation effect

Actions to support these objectives need to be developed.

2. Timing

The SWG-CMP Chair (Australia) will refine the draft handbook and strategic plan based on views received during the Conservation Committee meeting and then consult directly with CMP Stakeholders over the next six months. Part of this work will involve preparing and updating necessary supporting documents as key attachments to the handbook and strategic plan, including the templates for drafting CMPs and CMP nominations. Views on the handbook and strategic plan will be sought during SC68c in 2021 and a final version submitted to IWC68 for endorsement. A shorter-term priority action plan 2021-2023 will also be developed to accompany the strategic plan.

3. Questions for discussion

The following questions may be helpful for the Conservation Committee in formulating comments on the handbook and strategic plan, or providing ideas to strengthen the document. Responses can be shared during the Conservation Committee meeting email discussions or the CMP Zoom session, or at any time to the SWG-CMP Chair (Australia) at whales@awe.gov.au

- What elements of the CMP program do you think are working well? What elements are not?
 - Could the program's strengths be better reflected in the handbook and strategic plan?
 - Could challenges be addressed in a better way?
- Over ten years on from the establishment of the CMP program in 2008, does the program still have value for those involved? How could it be modernised?
- Would you recommend or suggest any different strategic objectives?
- How could government participation and leadership in CMPs be incentivised (other than funding)? What are the benefits of participating?

- How could the SWG-CMP better assist in engaging range state governments?
- How could the CMP program integrate and collaborate better with other IWC Working Groups (I.e. Bycatch, Ship Strikes, Sub-Committee on Small Cetaceans)
- Do the handbook and strategic plan achieve a balance between the voluntary and non-binding nature of CMPs, and the need for accountability, commitment, and reporting?
- How could the process for developing a CMP be made clearer to Governments not familiar with the process?
- Do you have suggestions for priority work actions that would assist in implementing the strategic plan?

Annex A

CURRENT CMP ACTION PLAN – 2018-2020

This action plan sits under the current CMP work plan. Many actions are ongoing and will remain a priority up to IWC68. An updated action plan will be drafted over the coming months to accompany the strategic plan, for endorsement at IWC68. Suggestions for priority actions can be provided to whales@awe.gov.au to assist with drafting.

Topic	Action	Sub-task	Status	Responsible parties
1. Strengthened support for range states	1.1. As required, work with range states of current CMPs to help them develop a strategy for securing funding for CMP actions and improving buy-in from stakeholders responsible for progressing actions.	1.1.1. Highlight the services the Commission can provide to help participating range states overcome impediments to effective CMP implementation (e.g. help identifying and approaching external donors, outreach to key stakeholders etc.) in the CMP newsletter and on the CMP website. Invite range states to approach the SWG-CMP to develop a strategy for overcoming barriers to effective implementation.	Ongoing	SWG-CMP, Secretariat
		1.1.2. If approached by range states, work together to develop a strategy for overcoming barriers to effective implementation.	Ongoing	SWG-CMP, Secretariat, ICG-SF, Coordinators, Range States
	1.2. Facilitate greater in-person support for participating range states during the development and implementation process	1.2.1. Compile a list of skills and experience of CMP actors to support capacity building/mentoring.	Under review	SWG-CMP
2. Priority species for CMP development	2.1. Ensure the Commission's list of priority species for CMP development is up-to-date	2.1.1. Develop a formal process and timeframes for reviewing and updating the list of priority species for CMP development.	Complete	SWG-CMP, SC-CMP
	2.2. Conduct outreach activities to prospective CMP proponents	2.1.2. Write to relevant range states within two months of a species being added to the priority list, explaining the CMP process and encouraging them to develop a CMP. Explore opportunities to improve outreach.	Ongoing	SWG-CMP, Secretariat
3. Regional Inventories	3.1. Evaluate the regional inventory initiative	3.1.1. Review the usefulness of the Pacific inventory.	Ongoing	SWG-CMP, Secretariat
		3.1.2. Submit recommendations to the Conservation Committee on whether the initiative should continue. If appropriate, this should include proposal(s) for commencing the development of new regional inventories.	Ongoing – recommendations will be submitted to IWC68	SWG-CMP
4. Better promotion of the CMP program and its achievements	4.1. Develop and improve communication materials for CMPs	4.1.1. Develop a six monthly newsletter promoting the achievements and upcoming priorities of the CMP initiative.	Ongoing	SWG-CMP, Secretariat
		4.1.2 Update CMP website to include achievements to date, case studies, pictures, events etc.	Ongoing	SWG-CMP, Secretariat