

Report of the Conservation Committee Planning Group (CCPG)

Tuesday 12 July 2022 (20:00-22:00 BST)

Virtual via Zoom

1. Welcome and aims of the meeting

In the absence of the Chair of the Conservation Committee (CC), Lorenzo Rojas-Bracho, the vice-Chair Catherine Bell opened the meeting and welcomed all participants. Members of the Secretariat were appointed as rapporteurs.

The Chair drew attention to the Terms of Reference (Annex B) for annual Conservation Committee Planning Group (CCPG) meetings, which were endorsed at IWC66 in 2016. The Chair recalled that there was no meeting last year (2021) for this group; rather the last meeting was in May 2020 which was followed by the virtual CC in October 2020. This meeting would provide updates and discuss progress from the intersessional period and then focus on planning the agenda for the Conservation Committee meeting in October and developing a new workplan for beyond IWC68.

2. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda (Annex A) was adopted. The list of participants is given at Annex C and a list of documents available to the meeting is at Annex D.

3. Conservation Committee update since CC2020

a) Update from Working Groups

The Chair introduced an update paper summarising intersessional progress on bycatch, Conservation Management Plans (CMPs), ship strikes, whale watching, noise and marine debris as well as the developing areas of ecosystem functioning, chemical pollution and climate change (CCPG/JUL22/04). She summarised some highlights noting the interaction with the SC especially in the context of the Bycatch Mitigation Initiative (BMI) and ecosystem functioning.

Standing Working Group (SWG) Chairs were invited to add brief additional updates, and comments from participants were provided. Further detail of the discussions is summarised below.

Bycatch Mitigation Initiative

Given that the Bycatch SWG Chair (Belgium, Langerock) was unable to attend the meeting, the Secretariat's Bycatch Coordinator (Passadore) provided a few highlights of the BMI's recent work including:

- Bycatch Factsheets are being developed under contract for Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) as part of promoting the [FAO Technical Guidelines](#) to Reduce and Prevent Marine Mammal Bycatch.
- The Secretariat participated in the virtual FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) meeting in 2021 and will attend the 2022 meeting in person with the goal of highlighting cetacean bycatch and look for collaboration activities.
- The Secretariat attended a FAO Regional meeting in the Indian Ocean in June 2022, again to identify possible collaboration and draw attention to challenges and opportunities for monitoring and mitigating bycatch.
- A Letter of Agreement is under final review with FAO for the four-year GEF/FAO Project under the Common Oceans Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ) tuna 2 project. The goal of

the project is to assess and mitigate bycatch in tuna fisheries in the Indian and Western Pacific Oceans. The project will be sequential, starting with assessment of bycatch and data gaps, risks of interactions, promoting awareness and capacity building to promote best practices to prevent and reduce bycatch. FAO COFI meeting in September will offer an opportunity to meet with the partners in this project.

Simmonds raised a question concerning the inclusion of Fish Aggregation Devices (FADs) in the bycatch project. It was noted that FADs have also come to the attention of the marine debris group.

Conservation Management Plans

Robinson (Chair, CMP Standing Working Group and Australia) gave a brief report of the CMP SWG including progress on the Action plan and Strategic Plan and the development of a CMP Handbook (CCPG/JUL22/08). Robinson thanked everyone involved in the CMP programme SWG and in the wider CC and SC community and noted the considerable progress despite COVID-19. A few key activities were emphasised:

- The Amazon River Dolphin CMP was endorsed by SC, CC and Commission last year (2021) at the Virtual Special Meeting (VSM). Colombia is leading and has appointed a Coordinator for this CMP.
- Two workshops were held recently as part of CMP actions; one on the South West Atlantic Southern Right Whale and another on the franciscana communications tool. The report from the workshop as well as products from the campaign will be shared once finalised.
- In terms of planning and programme management, the SWG needs to provide an update for IWC68 on the CMP Strategic Plan. The draft Strategic Plan focuses on realistic and achievable actions to strengthen the CMP programme over the next few years. The plan comprises building in adjustments to the leadership to include a Co-Chair or co-lead role so there is more capacity for communication, fundraising and consistent support to coordinators. As part of that work, a Handbook is being drafted to capture all useful, relevant information in one document. This will be made available to all governments with the aim to increase awareness and understanding of the CMP Programme while also strengthening the communication and cooperation between CC and SC CMP groups regarding the CMP development process.

Iñíguez (Argentina) thanked Robinson for the summary and briefly reported news on the franciscana CMP and their 'My Neighbour Franciscana' outreach campaign. Iñíguez shared an example of the infographic and explained that once complete, interpretative panels and short videos will be uploaded on the IWC website in Portuguese, Spanish and English. These products will be presented at the CC meeting and then adopted by the IWC.

Galletti (Chile) intervened with an update on the plan of the CMP for Southern Eastern Pacific right whale. Representatives from Chile and Peru participated in a meeting on 11 July 2022 to set a date for the expert workshop that would start the six-year review of the CMP (9-12 August 2022). Dates have also been set (3-4 October 2022) for a workshop in Lima (previously postponed due to COVID-19) and to be followed by a final review of the CMP. The revised CMP will be presented to the CC and Commission in October.

Ship Strikes

Livermore (Chair, Ship Strikes Standing Working Group and IFAW) provided an outline for the new refreshed workplan for 2022-24 which includes updated high-risk areas and populations, adding that there is also an updated Strategic Plan for 2022-32 period. Comments were welcomed before the October meeting. Livermore highlighted that the IWC Database manager (O'Loughlin) has been

supported with £10k of SC funding to progress the Ship Strikes (SS) database (the balance of funding from Voluntary Contributions), and there will be a need to extend this position and so further funding will be required. Priorities for the SS Database include strengthening areas that need improvement and incorporating quality control measures. All new entries need to be verified and classified under the new system, reviewed by the IWC Ship strike data review group and entered in a timely fashion. Completing the IWC database with official ship-strike records from the USA, Australia and other countries is a priority in order to add value to the data. Increased data access and use is another priority, and could be achieved with the IWC website hosting the database.

Climate Change and Marine Debris

Simmonds (Topic lead -Marine Debris and Climate Change) noted that the document provided for the meeting (CCPG/JUL22/04) has an excellent summary of the climate change work, as well as marine debris. Simmonds raised one question that came up during the Marine Debris group deliberations, notably how to characterise the IWC's contribution to the challenge of marine debris. Cetacean strandings is one route to engagement as it provides useful information on impacts to cetaceans through ingestion and entanglement. This topic merits further discussion prior to the Conservation Committee meeting. Simmonds suggested that a group be convened in the next few days – those interested are invited to join. This group would return with a proposal for consideration at CC in October pre-IWC68. CCPG **agreed** that this item should be added to the CC agenda. The Chair called for volunteers along with help from the Secretariat and the UK.

Cetaceans and Ecosystem functioning

Galletti (Topic lead- Cetaceans and Ecosystem Functioning and Chile) shared results from the virtual workshop on Socio-economic Values of the Contributions of Cetaceans to Ecosystem Functioning held in early April 2022. This topic was endorsed by the Commission in Resolutions from 2016 and 2018 along with the plan for a CC workshop. The objective of the workshop was to review the results from the SC-CMS meeting and consider them in a socio-economic context. Speakers included global experts from multidisciplinary backgrounds. Galletti noted how challenging it was to shift from ecosystem functioning to ecosystem services, as the services must be linked to human values. As a next step a pilot project on one species with a simple set of threats was proposed for consideration by the Commission. Galletti will work on Terms of Reference and a proposal for IWC68, establishing a link with the SC modelling work. At the workshop, economists also raised the idea of financial and institutional frameworks that could be used to create a 'conservation fund' for the socio-economic contributions that are provided by the whales. Nature-based solutions merit consideration, and the workshop generated considerable interest in this approach.

Anthropogenic Underwater Noise

Iñiguez (Topic lead- Anthropogenic Underwater Noise and Argentina), provided an update on the work of the Anthropogenic Underwater Noise (AUN) group. He pointed out the comprehensive summary of the work underway with International Maritime Organisation (IMO) in the background paper (CCPG/JUL22/04). This work is led by Webster (Secretariat) and Leaper (UK). Iñiguez and Andriolo (Brazil) will plan a workshop prior to IWC68 to develop a workplan on this issue.

The Chair thanked those who intervened for their contributions and noted the remarkable progress that has been made despite the pandemic.

b) Engagement with other organisations

The Chair noted the Secretariat paper (CCPG/JUL22/01) on engagement with other intergovernmental organisations. Webster (Secretariat) highlighted the GEF/FAO Common Oceans Project which was discussed under the bycatch progress update and the collaboration with the IMO on the review of the Guidelines on Underwater Radiated Noise which will continue until January 2023. Staniland

(Secretariat) noted the growing engagement with the Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) and related work with the British Antarctic Survey (BAS) which is in Cambridge.

The Secretariat welcomed suggestions and feedback on engagement with other organisations and reiterated the need for delegates to IWC to assist in 'covering' meetings when the Secretariat does not have the capacity to participate, whether a matter of travel costs or time.

The Chair noted that ASCOBANS prepares a schedule of events to facilitate the process of ensuring representation as appropriate and to 'carry the flag' for cetaceans. This might be a tool of use to the IWC Secretariat.

4. CC Intersessional activities until IWC68

a) Conservation Committee progress on the mid-term review

The Chair recalled that the CC agreed to a mid-term review of the Strategic Plan at the 2020 virtual meeting and called on the Secretariat to introduce document CCPG/JUL22/03 which outlines the process and results of the review. Webster (Secretariat) gave an overview of the initial findings which included overall, good progress made across most work programmes, all of which are still relevant and should be maintained. Changes in wording were suggested, particularly for measures of success, which may have been overly ambitious. The main challenge remains getting government and stakeholder buy-in as those are key to success.

The Chair invited discussion on the next steps, including the planned format for the presentation of the mid-term review at the CC meeting.

Secretariat (Lent) emphasised that the IWC68 meeting is an excellent opportunity to ask Commissioners and stakeholders for support and to ensure that they remain engaged in this work. While scientific knowledge is increasing, that may not be reflected in actual responses to these threats as progress in the work of the CC. The greatest success is seen where governments engage in the programmes and this needs to be encouraged and maintained.

Simmonds asked about the ranking of chemical pollution within the document, recounting the long history of IWC work on pollution and was concerned that presenting this in its current form could be underselling the work that has been done. The Secretariat (Staniland) responded to explain that this review is only considering the CC work on chemical pollution. This area is still in development and needs fresh impetus and input from this group.

Simmonds suggested adding an action point that the CC look at the low scoring areas and how they can be developed. The Chair agreed this point and encouraged everyone to read the document and develop ideas in preparation for CC.

b) Conservation Committee workplan

The Chair noted that the development of a new workplan will be dependent on the outcome of Commission decisions on WGOE proposals as well as any revisions to the CC Strategic Plan as a result of the mid-term review. The draft workplan presented in document CCPG/JUL22/06 is a starting point for input from CCPG. In addition, all CC recommendations since 2016 have been provide to the meeting in the spreadsheet CCPG/JUL22/05 with progress noted, to facilitate determination of actions or deliverables.

The Chair encouraged a careful review of the draft workplan and called for comments to be submitted to the Chair or Secretariat. The plan will be reviewed for endorsement at the Conservation Committee meeting and subsequent Commission.

c) Draft Conservation Committee Agenda

Due to the 100-day deadline (9 July 2022) falling before this meeting, the Secretariat drafted an agenda based on the one that was developed in 2020 before the postponement of the Commission. Comments on this agenda are welcome. (CCPG/JUL22/For Info/01) until 8 August, and a revised CC agenda will be posted on 18 August.

d) Update on WGOE issues relevant to the Conservation Committee

The Chair noted that there has been no substantive change to the WG-OE documents since the time at which the CC provided comments to the WG-OE. Since the September 2021 Virtual Special Meeting (VSM), the WG-OE papers were further refined but the substance of the proposals has not changed. A virtual meeting of the WG-OE takes place on 19 July 2022, and the latest versions of the papers have been distributed. Small issues are still unresolved, but the focus of the meeting will be on key issues. Challenges on the placement and existence of the CC are expected but not a majority of the views. The WG-OE has also presented a new draft of a paper which considers voting rights, which the WG-OE agreed to do at the VSM in September 2021. There is also an in-person meeting of the WG-OE before IWC68 (13 October 2022 14h00 – 17h30).

No further actions were noted.

e) Conservation Database Update

A progress report on the development of the Conservation Database was provided prior to the meeting and included some background to this project (CCPG/JUL22/09). O'Loughlin (Secretariat and Data Manager) gave an overview, noting that the Voluntary National Conservation Reports are currently in text form in the IWC archive. These old forms were used to develop a webpage through the CRM and InforMEA Server. Searches can be conducted by a number of keywords, and all current data are from past reports. The list of all the themes and sections is in the background document and are key words for a search. Country pages provide the country reports. Content can be added by a log-in system, allowing additional data to be entered via the website. The other option is to fill out a CSV template and the Secretariat can upload this for the country. For both options, new data go into a quarantine for the delegate to approve before it is made public, which allows some sub-users under each country to help input data, whether an NGO or a regional government agency. Another option under investigation by the IWC Secretariat is collaborating with UNEP's World Conservation Monitoring Centre's Online reporting system which other IGOs are using.

Webster (Secretariat) noted that including CMP work in the relevant country would be another option, with a link to the IWC website and/or other countries engaged in the work. The CMP SWG Chair appreciated this consideration of CMPs into this system.

The Chair recognised the considerable progress made and thanked the Secretariat for this work. The CCPG was asked to review the specific questions in the paper and to consider providing some responses.

5. Conservation Committee Finance

a) Finance updates

The Chair (Chair of VCF Steering Group) presented paper CCPG/JUL22/02 which summarised the current status of the Voluntary Conservation Fund (VCF). The table indicated there are approximately £270k available and £213k already allocated to specific projects.

b) Upcoming funding proposals

Referring to the previous discussion, the CCPG **encouraged** SWG Chairs and topic leads to consider their upcoming funding needs and were invited to highlight any requests that they plan to submit at IWC68 or beforehand (either requests to the Voluntary Conservation Fund or proposals to seek external funds).

Simmonds raised a question regarding the potential use of the VCF for building relationships across other organisations (i.e. funding participation in the meetings of other bodies). This was considered risky in light of the current financial situation. However, it was noted that the active fund raising underway by the Secretariat could be used for this purpose.

6. Conservation Committee positions

The Chair noted that, in accordance with the CC Working Methods (which include Terms for Chair and vice-Chair and SWG Chairs), the Conservation Committee need to consider leadership positions for the CC, noting that the Chair will be stepping down at IWC68. In addition, new Chairs will be needed for the Standing Working Groups for Whale Watching and Bycatch. The Chair requested that anyone interested in filling in these positions or suggesting names forward their suggestions.

The CCPG **noted** that the Secretariat would send a Circular advertising the immediate and expected vacancies for CC positions and encourage informal intersessional discussions. New post holders could be endorsed at the CC pre-meeting in October 2022 at IWC68. The Chair encouraged Contracting Governments to consider these positions.

7. Any other business

The Chair reminded countries to submit their Voluntary Conservation Reports, preferably by the 60-day deadline for all IWC68 documents (18 August 2022).

There were no further comments, and the Chair thanked all those who joined and participated in the meeting and closed the meeting at 21:35.

Annex A. Agenda

1. Welcome and aims of the meeting

- a) Appointment of Chair [Cat Bell is proposed]
- b) Appointment of Rapporteur [The Secretariat will offer to act as rapporteur]
- c) Terms of Reference and aims of the meeting
- d) Review of documents available to the meeting

2. Adoption of the agenda

3. Conservation Committee update since CC2020

- a) Update from Working Groups
- b) Engagement with other organisations

4. Preparation for IWC68

- a) Conservation Committee progress on the mid-term review
- b) Draft Conservation Committee agenda
- c) Conservation Committee workplan
- d) Update on WGOE issues relevant to the Conservation Committee
 - a. Review of comments sent from the CC to the WGOE
 - b. Summary of any further actions taken by the WGOE (revised papers, workshops, etc)
- e) Conservation Database update

5. Conservation Committee Finance

- a) Finance Updates
- b) Upcoming funding proposals

6. Conservation Committee positions

7. Any other business

Annex B Terms of Reference for annual Conservation Committee Planning Group meeting

The Conservation Committee Planning Group is tasked with helping set the agenda for the biennial Conservation Committee meeting and progression of the Conservation Committees work plan in the intersessional period.

It will:

- Consider the Committee's progress since the last meeting of the Committee, in particular with regards to intersessional work, and support continued effective delivery of its work.
- Identify key discussions, priorities and deliverables for inclusion on the agenda of the next meeting of the Committee.
- Support the Chair in preparing for Conservation Committee meetings.
- Provide an additional opportunity for discussing the strategic development of the Conservation Committee, particularly with regards it's outward facing strategic plan, strategic development of priorities, engagement with other organisations, and funding.

Membership

The group is intended to be small and focused and does not replace a full meeting of the Conservation Committee. Attendance is not restricted but may be limited by available space. It will primarily be composed of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Conservation Committee, Chairs of the Committee's standing working groups, and nominees from contracted governments. Additional expertise will be invited as appropriate to the agenda by the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Conservation Committee. The meeting will be Chaired by the Chair of the Conservation Committee.

Timings

The Conservation Committee planning meeting should meet at least annually and where possible in conjunction with meetings of the Scientific and/or Conservation Committee to ensure best use of resources.

Annex C List of participants

ARGENTINA

Miguel Iñíguez

AUSTRALIA

Annie Robinson

CHILE

Barbara Galetti

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Nina Lysenko

GERMANY

Nicole Hielscher

NEW ZEALAND

Tom Butler

PORTUGAL

Luis Freitas

UK

Catherine Bell

Emma Day

Murray Fyfe

USA

Dave Weller

Madison Harris

CC Topic Lead Marine Debris and Climate Change

Mark Simmonds

Standing Working Group Ship Strikes Chair

Sharon Livermore

Scientific Committee

Alex Zerbini (Chair)

Lindsay Porter (Vice Chair)

Animal Welfare Institute

Sue Fisher

Fundacion Cethus

Carolina Cassani

Whale and Dolphin Conservation

Vanesa Tossenberger

IWC Secretariat

Cecilia Passadore

David Mattila

Elizabeth Campbell

Emma Neave-Webb

Iain Staniland

Imogen Webster

Isidora Katara

Kate Wilson

Lydia O'Loughlin

Rebecca Lent

Stella Duff

Annex D List of documents

Document Number	Title	Authors
CCPG/GEN/01	Draft Agenda Conservation Committee Planning Group 2022	IWC Secretariat
Primary papers		
CCPG/JUL22/01	Update to the CCPG on Cooperation with other Organisations	IWC Secretariat
CCPG/JUL22/02	Update on Conservation Committee Finance	IWC Secretariat
CCPG/JUL22/03	Mid-term Review of the Conservation Committee Strategic Plan 2016-2026	IWC Secretariat, CC Chair, CC Vice-Chair and Topic Leads
CCPG/JUL22/04	Conservation Committee intersessional progress since CC 2020	IWC Secretariat, Chairs of SWG and Topic Leads
CCPG/JUL22/05	CC Recommendations 2016-2020	IWC Secretariat
CCPG/JUL22/06	Conservation Committee Workplan for the Intersessional Period 2022-2026	IWC Secretariat
CCPG/JUL22/07	CMP Action Plan Progress 2018-2020, New Action Plan 2022-2024	Chair, Standing Working Group on Conservation Management Plans
CCPG/JUL22/08	Introduction to the CMP Handbook and strategic plan for the CMP Program	Chair, Standing Working Group on Conservation Management Plans
CCPG/JUL22/09	Update on the development of the IWC Conservation Database for Voluntary Conservation Reporting	IWC Secretariat
For INFO papers		
CCPG/JUL22/For Info 01	Draft Conservation Committee Agenda IWC68	IWC Secretariat