

An update on the work of the Task Team Initiative, 2018-22

IWC Scientific Committee

Progress of the Small Cetacean Task Team Initiative

At its 2014 meeting, the Scientific Committee agreed to trial a new intersessional approach for situations that are considered a high conservation priority and especially where time is short, and no mitigation actions are in place. Consequently, at its 2015 meeting, the Scientific Committee developed the [Terms of Reference for a Small Cetaceans Task Team Initiative](#) to assist the Scientific Committee in providing timely and effective advice on situations where a population of cetaceans is in danger of a significant decline that may eventually lead to its extinction; the ultimate aim being to ensure that extinction does not occur.

In 2020 the Conservation Committee recommended that the IWC website make the Task Teams more prominent. This has been done and a dedicated page is published [here](#). There is currently one active task team, the Lahille's Dolphin Task Team and two previously formed task teams have either progressed or have been superseded by other conservation plans.

Lahille's Dolphin Task Team

The team was proposed in 2020 to initiate, guide and co-ordinate implementation of conservation strategies for populations in Brazil and Uruguay, and to investigate the causes of population declines in Argentina and Uruguay. At SC68D the Scientific Committee heard about activities conducted during 2021 ([SC/68D/SM/08](#)). The Team held two virtual meetings with the Southern Brazil-Uruguay (SBU) and Argentina research teams, to exchange information and set goals and priority actions. These included photo-identification studies, train surveillance agents, conduct interviews with fishermen and promote conservation of Lahille's bottlenose dolphins and cooperative fishing through community-based tourism. In September 2021, 40 participants were trained in mark-recapture analytical techniques and more than 30 agents from three different governmental agencies (IBAMA, ICMBio and PATRAM) participated in training designed to combat illegal fisheries at a regional scale. Surveys for the next two field seasons were planned and a virtual space of sharing dorsal fin catalogues was created. A citizen surveillance app was also developed, specifically to record illegal fishing activities in coastal areas, and both sightings and strandings of Lahille's bottlenose dolphins.

Africa Sousa Task Team

In 2019, a list of potential participants was compiled, and the team was established in 2020 that comprised 35 members from 14 African countries. The first online meeting of the AFS-TT was held immediately prior to SC68B. At SC68C, the scientific committee received information on the development of a comprehensive action plan by the Consortium for the Conservation of the Atlantic Humpback Dolphin (CCAHD) focussing on *Sousa teuszii*. It was agreed, given the excellent work in progress on *Sousa teuszii* by the Consortium, many of whom were members of the original task team, that the AFS-TT would cease to address this taxon.

South Asian River Dolphin Task Team

The Task Team for the South Asian River dolphin was suspended following SC68C on the understanding that it could be reconstituted at any time should new actions be warranted on specific issues based on the recommendations made earlier by this task team. The Task Team Steering Committee will continue to monitor work on these two species and identify areas where additional work or involvement is required.