

Report of the Standing Working Group on Conservation Management Plans (CMPs)

Submitted by the Chair Annie Robinson

The Conservation Committee is requested to:

- *note the intersessional progress made by the CMP SWG*
- *endorse the new CMP Strategic Plan (years) and Handbook*
- *adopt the proposed action plan of the SWG on CMPs for 2022-2024*

INTRODUCTION

The Standing Working Group on Conservation Management Plans (SWG) has continued to implement the actions in the revised CMP Work Plan, which was endorsed by the Commission at IWC67. The IWC's CMP program continues to develop and remains a unique and effective model for generating and maintaining range state support for at-risk cetacean populations globally. There are five existing CMPs that continue to progress, the most recent being the Amazon River dolphin CMP endorsed by the Commission in 2021. There are four populations that have been deemed high priority for CMP development by the SC. While interest in the CMP program from IWC members remains strong, continuity of funding is a key challenge. The COVID-19 pandemic has also stalled progress in some areas, due to shifting government priorities and necessary postponement of some workshops and field activities.

PROGRESS ON CURRENT CMPS

Amazon river dolphin (2021)

Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Brazil

A CMP for Amazon River dolphins was endorsed by the SC at SC68c and agreed by the Commission at the Virtual Special Meeting in September 2021. The main objective of the CMP is to promote the conservation of river dolphin species (*Inia geoffrensis*, *Inia boliviensis*, *Inia araguaiaensis* and *Sotalia fluviatilis*) in the Amazon, Orinoco, and Tocantins/Araguaia basins through a regional strategy. The CMP will facilitate prioritisation of research and conservation actions among the different South American countries where these species live as well as guide national and regional actions. A coordinator has been appointed to manage delivery of CMP actions.

Franciscana dolphin (2016)

Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay

As part of the activities related to the Scientific Committee, the review of the species continues. To this end, a workshop was held in June 2022 in Curitiba, Brazil, where the main points considered were population structure and abundance estimation. Once the review of the species has been completed, the actions identified within the CMP, which has been in existence for six years, will be updated.

The public awareness campaign "Our neighbour the franciscana" is expected to be launched during the 68th Meeting of the IWC. This campaign is one of the priority actions identified from the beginning and includes various materials (infographics, video, stickers, panels and posters). The information produced can be used by the three range states and will be in English, Portuguese and Spanish. It will also be uploaded on the IWC website.

A book on the franciscana has recently been published, edited by Paulo Simões-Lopes and Marta Cremer of Elsevier, which in 19 chapters shows the situation of the species in Argentina, Brazil and

Uruguay. This information will also be useful for the future update of the CMP, as several of the actions identified by the IWC have been developed in this book.

Finally, an article on the CMP was prepared for publication in the ECO magazine to commemorate the 75th anniversary of IWC.

Western South Atlantic southern right whale (2012)

Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Uruguay

The range states continue to collaborate closely on research and conservation efforts under this CMP. After some delays due to COVID, a CMP workshop was recently held in June 2022. Given new scientific information and the progress of some CMP actions, the goal of the workshop was to review and update the previous CMP (2016-2020). New actions were identified during the workshop, some previously proposed actions were noted as advanced, and other actions were identified as necessary, primarily for some of the range states. Finally, other actions were identified as important to begin due to the lack of progress. In particular the development of a geographic information system and the subsequent generation of a risk map was identified as a priority action to begin as soon as possible. The full workshop report will be presented at the next SC meeting.

Eastern South Pacific southern right whale (2012)

Chile, Peru

Research and conservation actions under this CMP continue, guided by a 2021-2023 implementation strategy and the MoU between Chile and Peru for protection of the population. The last CMP review for Southeast Pacific Southern right whales was in 2016. Since then, considerable new scientific information has been collected and actions undertaken. At its 2021 meeting, the SC-CMP agreed to conduct a CMP review for this population in 2022.

A virtual expert workshop was held over three days in August 2022 to review historical and recent data on the population and update the scientific information of the CMP, in advance of a CMP coordination meeting 5 October to update the priority actions of the CMP for the next six years. Also in October 2022, a workshop will be held in Lima, Peru, to exchange experiences on whale watching tourism regulations, research permits and procedures for handling entanglements.

Western North Pacific gray whale (2010)

Russia, USA, Republic of Korea, Mexico, Japan

PRIORITY POPULATIONS

The SC can recommend that populations be treated as high priority for CMP development due to the conservation status of the population or species, and knowledge of threats. When this recommendation is made, range states and drafters can progress development of a draft CMP without first preparing a CMP nomination. The SC has made this recommendation for the following populations:

Arabian Sea Humpback Whale

The Arabian Sea Whale Network continues to undertake conservation action and research to further knowledge of this population. In 2021, focus areas for the network included furthering acoustic research and stranding response efforts for cetaceans in the Arabian sea. Thanks to the network's efforts, knowledge of Arabian Sea humpback whales is increasing which can feed into a CMP. The network continues awareness raising activities and engagement with the range state government of India and Oman.

Central American humpback whale

Mexico is progressing development of this CMP with the governments of US, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Panama. The main objective of the CMP is to conserve the Central America humpback whale population and its habitat through collaborative regional actions to reduce anthropogenic threats throughout its range. Additional objectives include improving habitat connectivity and conservation and improving knowledge about population size, trends, movement patterns, and habitat use.

Mediterranean sperm whale

ACCOBAMS has adopted the IWC guidelines for its CMPs and is progressing development of the CMP.

Mediterranean fin whale

ACCOBAMS is progressing development of the CMP.

CMP PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

Action Plan, Strategic Plan and Handbook

The current CMP Action Plan was set to expire in 2020, however it was extended to 2022 due to IWC68 postponements. Progress on the extended action plan is detailed in Annex 1. The Chair of the SWG-CMP has prepared a strategic plan and handbook for consultation ahead of IWC68 (*LINK to come*) as well as an action plan covering the period of 2022-2024 (Annex 2). The purpose of the handbook is to raise awareness of the CMP programme and to assist IWC members and stakeholders in navigating the CMP process. The draft handbook was reviewed by the CC at its virtual meeting in 2021, and the approach and purpose of these materials was approved in the 2022 joint CC/SC meeting and the CC Planning Group meetings.

Fundraising

Establishing financial self-sufficiency of CMPs remains a key challenge. The SWG continues to work with the Secretariat to explore external funding opportunities to support CMPs going forward. We have prepared a concept note for the CMP program that the Secretariat and others can use when approaching potential funders. We hope to work with co-ordinators to develop fundraising materials for distinct CMP actions.

Promoting the CMP program

The SWG launched a newsletter '*the CMP Deep Dive*' in 2019 to promote the achievements and priorities of the CMP program. Unfortunately, due to capacity constraints additional issues have not been developed. CMP stakeholders are invited to provide content for the newsletter at any time, including upcoming training and workshops, new research, and information about any of the cetaceans that are covered by CMPs. Content can be sent to whales@awe.gov.au.

The SWG-CMP also plans to update the CMP content on the IWC website, to include new CMPs and priority populations.

Annex 1

CMP ACTION PLAN – 2018-2020

The table below identifies measurable actions to progress the priority work areas during the remaining two years of this work plan.

Topic	Action	Sub-task	Timeframe	Responsible parties	Progress/outcome – July 2022
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.	Dec 2018	SWG-CMP, Secretariat	A concept note for the CMP program was developed in 2020 to assist with fundraising. This work will be taken forward by the Secretariat as part of the fundraising work plan, with support from the SWG-CMP. Information on how the Commission can support range states will be included in the CMP handbook.
		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.	Feb 2019	SWG-CMP	CMP coordinators are collaborative and provide support and expertise for multiple CMPs. However, the Commission has not been able to formally facilitate in-person support due to COVID and financial restrictions.
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.	Mar 2019	SWG-CMP, SC-CMP	The SWG-CMP chair maintains a list. The SC reviews and re-confirms recommendations on priority species at its meetings. To be carried over to new workplan
	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	To be carried over to new workplan

3. Regional Inventories	3.1. Evaluate the regional inventory initiative	3.1.1. Review the usefulness of the Pacific inventory.	Sep 2019	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.	Sep 2020	SWG-CMP	The SWG-CMP Chair evaluated the effectiveness of the initiative for CMPs. It advised the CC in 2020 that the process for recommending a population/species be treated as a priority for CMP development is sufficient. If/when there is funding to scale up the CMP program and there is capacity to keep inventories up to date, the idea could be revisited. It may be useful for other CC Programs.
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.	Dec 2018 (first issue)	SWG-CMP, Secretariat	First issue published in 2020. This has not continued due to capacity constraints. Will carry over to new workplan.
		4.1.2 Update CMP website to include achievements to date, case studies, pictures, events etc.	Dec 2018 (first update)	SWG-CMP, Secretariat	Underway

Annex 2

CMP ACTION PLAN – OCT 2022-2024

Topic	Action	Sub-task	Timeframe	Responsible parties
1. Seek a co-chair or program lead (for term 2022-24)	1.1. Seek interest from the SWG-CMP and SC CMP Subcommittee members to take on a leadership role in the SWG-CMP (alongside the SWG-CMP Chair) to help drive and progress tasks, and provide support and advice to CMP coordinators.	1.1.1. Discuss and record roles and responsibilities for this role	Oct 2022 – March - 2023	SWG-CMP, Secretariat
2. Priority species for CMP development	2.1. Publish an up-to-date list of CMP priority species (as recommended by the SC) on the IWC website.		Mar 2023	SWG-CMP
	2.2. Conduct outreach activities to prospective CMP proponents	2.2.1. Write to relevant range states to provide the CMP handbook and offer support from the SWG-CMP in CMP development.	Ongoing	SWG-CMP, Secretariat
3. Progress fundraising	3.1. Work with the Secretariat's fundraising officer to identify opportunities and tools needed for CMP fundraising.	3.1.1. Update the concept note and develop any additional fundraising tools.	Sept 2023	SWG-CMP, Secretariat
		3.1.2. Identify discrete projects from existing CMPs that may benefit from fundraising.	Sep 2023	SWG-CMP
4. Better promotion of the CMP program and its achievements	4.1. Develop and improve communication materials for CMPs	4.1.1. Continue an at-least annual newsletter for the CMP program	Next issue in 2022, then ongoing.	SWG-CMP, Secretariat
		4.1.2 Update CMP website to include achievements to date, case studies, pictures, events etc.	Ongoing	SWG-CMP, Secretariat
		4.1.3 Identify opportunities for social media promotion		