

IWC Bureau Meeting, 28 February 2023.

Update from the IWC Scientific Committee

Alexandre Zerbini (SC Chair), Lindsay Porter (SC Vice-Chair) and Iain Staniland (Head of Science, Conservation and Management).

In late January 2023, Zerbini and Porter visited the Red House to work with Staniland and other members of the SC Secretariat on various topics relevant to the work of the Committee, including a revision of the SC Handbook and preparations for the upcoming meeting of the IWC SC (SC69A). The SC will meet in person for the first time since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 (the last in-person meeting was in Nairobi in 2019). The purpose of this document is to provide an update to the Bureau on relevant aspects of the work of the SC in light of the upcoming meeting of the Committee.

SC69A meeting

The next meeting of the IWC Scientific Committee shall take place in Bled, Slovenia, between 24 April and 6 May 2023. The SC meeting will have four plenary days (24 April and 4-6 May) and eight days for sub-committee meetings (25 April to 2 May). The 3rd of May will be used by sub-group convenors, rapporteurs and the SC leadership for consolidating the sub-group reports and preparation of the sub-committee reports for discussion during the SC plenary. Two pre-meetings will occur before the full SC meets. The pre-meeting of the Abundance Steering Group (ASG) will take place on 21-23 April and will review abundance estimates submitted to the Committee and related matters. A second pre-meeting, supported by the government of New Zealand, will be held on 22 and 23 April with the goal of reviewing a risk assessment and management considerations put forward by New Zealand to improve conservation of the Māui and the Hector's dolphin. The meeting of the SC Convenors and the traditional Convenor's lunch will happen on 7 May. We are extremely grateful to former SC Chair, Dr. Robert Suydam, who offered to cover the cost of the lunch to assist the SC in saving meeting funds. A joint meeting of the Conservation Committee and the Scientific Committee will take place in the afternoon of 7 May.

There will be limited virtual participation at the SC meeting this year. This is for two reasons: first, the proceedings of the in-person meeting are confidential until the SC report is publicly released, and second, it would be logistically difficult to coordinate a hybrid meeting. Participation via conference call will be limited to SC members identified by sub-group convenors to cover specific agenda items. The SC recognizes that virtual participation is beneficial for both the Committee as well as attendees who are not able to come to the meeting in person. Therefore, the SC will develop a plan to allow for broader participation of attendees in the future. This plan will be presented for consideration by the Commission at IWC69.

A draft agenda for the SC meeting has been distributed through an IWC circular communication (IWC.SC.236, 2 February 2023) and is available [here](#). A draft annotated agenda will be provided three weeks prior to the start SC69A, once comments by SC members to the agenda circulated on 2 Feb are received by the SC leadership.

A list of invited participants has been finalized by the SC leadership in consultation with the group of convenors and the Secretariat is now working on formal invitations and travel arrangements.

Indian Ocean Sanctuary

The IOS was established by the Commission in 1979 as described in Article 7(a), Section III of the Schedule of the ICRW Convention available [here](#).

In accordance with article 7(a), the IOS was reviewed by the SC in 2002 under the understanding that only one review of this Sanctuary was needed.

The SC is preparing for the decadal review of the Southern Ocean Sanctuary (SOS), which will be initiated at the SC69A meeting. In preparation for the review of the SOS, Committee members questioned whether a new review of the IOS was also warranted. During presentation of the 2019-2022 SC Reports at IWC68, the Committee requested guidance from the Commission on a review of the Indian Ocean Sanctuary (IOS), however no direct instructions were provided by the Commission on how to proceed. Considering the need to reduce the SC agenda due to the budgetary challenges the Committee has been facing, the SC leadership proposes not to engage in any review of the IOS until the SOS review is completed and additional guidance with respect to the need to review the IOS is provided by the Commission at IWC69.