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Sub-committees/working group name: E

Report of the intersessional work on Anthropogenic Underwater Noise

Anthropogenic Underwater Noise Working Group



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Report of the intersessional work on Anthropogenic Underwater Noise

April 2023

Submitted by the AUNWG

Background

Since at least 2004, the IWC Scientific and Conservation Committees have been discussing the effects of noise on cetaceans. Cetaceans rely on sound for survival. It is their primary sense, necessary for successful foraging, migration, and reproduction. Man-made (anthropogenic) ocean noise has increased dramatically in recent years, with sources ranging from shipping to seismic exploration, drilling, and construction. Anthropogenic ocean noise is identified as a priority threat in the IWC Conservation Committee's Strategic Plan. Research is ongoing to understand the impact of noise on cetaceans and the effectiveness of various approaches to reducing exposure.

At IWC67 in 2018, the Committee approved proposals for additional work on Anthropogenic Underwater Noise, such as forming an intersessional correspondence group further to scope this work and collaboration with other organisations. It also approved a revised workplan for the Commission, which included preliminary activities on underwater noise. At the same meeting, an IWC Resolution on Underwater Noise (Resolution 2018-4) was adopted.

At the IWC68, the review workplan 2022-2024 was adopted (Annex 1). The workplan included a questionnaire to identify areas of ongoing and planned marine seismic surveys for hydrocarbon exploration for the next 5 years (2023-2028). The questionnaire was submitted to the Scientific Committee (68D) and approved. The questionnaire was subsequently approved by CC and endorsed at IWC68.

SEISMIC EXPLORATION

A questionnaire to compile global information on marine seismic surveys for hydrocarbon exploration, including currently ongoing activities and planned activities for the next 5 years (2023-2028), and identify sensitive areas with potential impacts to cetaceans from impulsive noise was endorsed by the IWC68. The [survey](#) was circulated from the IWC Secretariat to all member States, as well as other relevant international organisations, such as the CBD, the CMS/ACCOBAMS/ASCOBANS Joint Noise Working Group, the EU MSFD TG Noise Group, among others (IWC.ALL441). So far, 19 responses have been received from governmental and non-governmental agencies of Argentina, Benin, Brazil, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, Netherlands, New Zealand, Peru, South Africa, Spain, Uruguay, USA. The results of a preliminary analysis are being submitted to SC69A. The AUN group hope to continue receiving responses in the short term to move forward with the work, and in this regard, request the collaboration of the Scientific Committee.

COOPERATION WITH THE IMO

At MEPC 76 in 2021, the IMO agreed to review the 2014 Guidelines and identify the next steps. This was addressed in the Ship Design and Construction Sub-Committee (SDC 8) in January 2022. An outcome from this meeting was establishing a correspondence group coordinated by Canada to work on updating the IMO noise guidelines for reducing underwater noise from commercial shipping to address adverse impacts on marine life and identification of next steps. Following recommendation (SC2184) encouraging further intersessional collaboration and coordination between the Scientific Committee and the Conservation Committee on underwater noise, representatives of the SC and CC, along with the Secretariat, have joined the IMO CG to contribute to discussions reviewing the Guidelines. The process has involved three rounds of input in the form of questionnaires on general issues to be addressed. The IMO Sub-Committee on Ship Design and Construction (SDC 9) met from 23-27 January 2023. The draft revised Guidelines developed by a correspondence group were further revised by a working group that met during the Sub-Committee session. These draft guidelines were agreed upon and will now go to the Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC 80), which meets from 3-7 July 2023, for approval.

Annex 1

Anthropogenic Underwater Noise Workplan 2022-2024

Anthropogenic Underwater Noise					
Aim	Deliverable/Action	Progress	Responsibility	Timescale	Costs (if applicable)
<p>Consider and act upon, as appropriate, the advice and recommendations from the SC on the impacts of anthropogenic noise on cetaceans.</p> <p>Establish linkages between the IWC and other relevant bodies to ensure the dissemination of advice on anthropogenic noise.</p>	<p>Further identify and engage with appropriate regional and international bodies addressing anthropogenic noise and progress any opportunities for capacity building, in particular with regards to the IMO (<i>IWC/64/Rep5. IWC/64/Rep1</i>).</p> <p>With input from SC68C and D update the CC workplan for 2022-2024 on underwater noise.</p> <p>Review management recommendations from other IGOs working on this topic and update the 2020 paper.</p> <p>Review progress of outreach activities and information flow, specifically provide advice on how the IWC could further enhance its outreach and capacity building activities.</p>	<p>Meeting held September 2022</p>	<p>Conservation Committee</p> <p>Secretariat</p> <p>Anthropogenic Underwater Noise Working Group</p>	<p>2020-Ongoing</p> <p>For IWC68</p>	
<p>Provide a report to the Commission synthesising progress in addressing IWC Recommendations on the mitigation and management of anthropogenic noise.</p>	<p>SC and CC workshops on underwater noise will be held during this intersessional period to review recommendations arising from previous relevant workshops and publications such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased Marine Activities on Cetaceans in the Arctic (<i>IWC/65/Rep07 Rev1</i>) • Workshop on the evaluation of stress and sound (<i>IWC66 rep1 (2015) 12.4.3</i>). 		<p>Anthropogenic Underwater Noise Working Group</p> <p>SC Sub-committee on Environmental Concerns (Noise)</p> <p>Sub-Committee on Unintended Human</p>	<p>2024. The reports of these workshops will be presented to IWC69.</p>	<p>Depending on format of workshop a funding request may be submitted to the VCF</p>

			Induced Mortality (shipping)		
Describe the extent of seismic exploration activities worldwide, and identify areas where cetacean populations, especially threatened ones, could be exposed	<p>1) Review the existing recommendations from the IWC on seismic activities and provide updates if needed.</p> <p>2) Compile published and unpublished literature on this issue.</p> <p>3) Engage with appropriate regional and international bodies addressing seismic exploration (such as CMS) to scope further work on dissemination of guidelines related to Anthropogenic Underwater noise.</p> <p>To describe the extent of seismic activities worldwide the following steps will be taken:</p> <p>1) distribute the questionnaire through notification from IWC Secretariat to contracting governments, and different bodies such as CMS, CBD, etc.</p> <p>2) Map the data with a Geographical Information System.</p> <p>3) Prepare a final document to circulate with the IWC CC, the IWC SC and the Commission.</p>		<p>Conservation Committee</p> <p>Secretariat Anthropogenic Underwater Noise Working Group</p>	<p>2021- Ongoing</p> <p>A report will be submitted to the next SC and CC meeting</p> <p>4-6 months (collect the information) IWC SC 69A (preliminary report)</p>	
Identify other important issues and synergies related to anthropogenic underwater noise (e.g., vessel noise)	Coordinate with other existing initiatives or groups within the IWC (e.g., ship strike, WW, stranding, etc.) to find synergies for common mitigation		<p>Anthropogenic Underwater Noise Working Group Scientific Committee groups</p> <p>Ship Strikes SWG</p> <p>SWG on Whale Watching</p>	Ongoing	