

# SC/69A/HIM/16

**Sub-committees/working group name: HIM**

**Update from the Ship Strikes Standing Working Group**

**Sharon Livermore, Russell Leaper, Lydia O'Loughlin**



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## **ABSTRACT**

This paper provides updates on the progress of IWC work on ship strikes and invites comments from the Scientific Committee. The new Ship Strikes Strategic Plan 2022-2032 was endorsed by the Conservation Committee at the 2022 meeting and by the Scientific Committee at SC68D. It was subsequently endorsed by the Commission at IWC68, and is supported by an updated Workplan for 2022-2024.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The IWC has identified the need to address the effects of ship strikes on cetacean populations, and especially large whale populations, as a conservation concern worldwide. Both the Conservation and Scientific Committees of the IWC are working to understand and reduce the threat posed by ship strikes. The Conservation Committee progresses its work through the Standing Working Group on Ship Strikes (SSWG), working closely with the Scientific Committee.

Both the new Ship Strikes Strategic Plan 2022-2032 and the proposed Workplan of the SSWG for 2022-2024 were presented to the Scientific Committee at SC68D. At this time, the Scientific Committee was also invited to provide comments on the set-up of the Ship Strikes Expert Panel and on additional funding for the Data Manager role.

The plans were welcomed and endorsed by the Scientific Committee at SC68D and suggested that the Strategy should also emphasise the importance of continuing efforts to identify new potential high risk areas, and offering technical support to stakeholders seeking to conduct the research or analyses required to identify areas of high risk in currently data poor areas.

## **PROGRESS/UPDATES**

### **Expert Panel on Ship Strikes:**

Following Commission endorsement at IWC68 of the CC recommendation to establish an Expert Panel on Ship Strikes, the Ship Strikes Data Review Group and Ship Routeing Group will be merged to create the initial Expert Panel. An IWC Circular was distributed calling for further nominations to the Expert Panel and nominations for those with expertise on shipping management and knowledge of the shipping industry are encouraged. This Panel will report to the SSWG and the SC.

The call received 24 nominations, which will be sifted by the Chair of the Working Group on Ship Strikes, the Convenor of Non-Deliberate Human Induced Mortality (HIM); Chair of the Conservation Committee (or a nominee); Chair of the Scientific Committee (or a nominee), Chair of the Data Review Group, Data Manager and Secretariat. The aim is to have a core Expert Panel of approximately 20 members with other experts called on as needed depending on topic and region.

### **Progress on previous SC recommendations related to High Risk areas in the Ship Strikes Strategic Plan:**

High risk areas identified in the IWC Ship Strikes Strategic Plan, with recommendations previously made by the Scientific Committee:

**Sub-Antarctic island at 54°15'S 36°45'W – blue, fin, right and humpback whales.** In 2021, the SC recommended the addition of the island at 54°15'S 36°45'W to the list of high-risk areas where mitigation measures should be considered in the IWC Strategic Plan. Subsequently, vessels have been requested to travel at 10knots or less in coastal waters in order to reduce the risk of collisions with whales. A voluntary slow down zone to keep speeds below 10knots has also been implemented for all cruise vessels visiting the island during the 2022/23 austral summer season<sup>1</sup>.

**Sri Lanka – blue whales** - a large number of ships are now choosing to sail south of the existing Traffic Separation Scheme (TSS) off Dondra Head due to the high risk of ship strikes with blue whales and other safety concerns relating to collision risk with small vessels. Recent analysis of AIS data for the period 01/10/2022 to 15/01/2023 shows 33% of all ships transiting this area and 50% of the ships travelling at greater than 17.5knots are now choosing to sail south to avoid the risks incumbent with use of the existing TSS. The number and percentage of ships sailing south is growing significantly (from around 20% in 2013), with a number of the world's largest carriers and individual masters choosing to sail roughly 15 nm south of the existing TSS. Shipping industry organisations continue to seek a solution that provides the safety benefits of a TSS established by IMO while avoiding the most important whale habitat.

**Hellenic Trench – sperm whales** - following outreach efforts by a coalition of scientists and NGOs, a number of major shipping companies have now voluntarily committed to slowing down or re-routeing their ships away the area of highest risk identified by the IWC SC. The coalition also recently secured the incorporation of the Hellenic Hydrographic Notices to Mariners into handbooks issued by the British Admiralty, helping to ensure widespread dissemination to raise awareness amongst mariners of the ship strike issue in the area. There are currently no IMO-endorsed routing measures in the Hellenic Trench, but ship strike risk reduction analyses and SC recommendations have identified two areas which if shipping routed around would reduce collision risk to sperm whales by around 70%. While individual companies are taking action to reduce ship strike risk, the recommendation from IWC and ACCOBAMS is that Greece should come forward with a routeing proposal to IMO to ensure consideration of optimum design of routeing, including the most appropriate mechanisms (e.g. Traffic Separation Schemes or Areas To Be Avoided).

**Mediterranean PSSA – fin and sperm whales** - France, Italy, Monaco and Spain submitted a full proposal to the Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC) 79 in December 2022 on the 'Designation of a Particular Sensitive Sea Area (PSSA) in the North-Western Mediterranean Sea to protect cetaceans from international shipping' (MEPC79/10). This PSSA includes the two SPAMI dedicated to cetaceans (i.e. the Pelagos Sanctuary and the Spanish whale migration corridor) and partially overlaps with the North-West Mediterranean Sea, Slope and Canyon IMMA. The focus of this proposal was the designation of a PSSA and additional associated measures to minimise the risk of ship strikes to fin and sperm whales. This proposal was reviewed by a PSSA Technical Group, which both the IWC Secretariat, HIM Convenor and SSWG Chair attended. MEPC 79 agreed '*in principle*' to the proposal, requesting additional work to refine the associated protective measures. The IWC offered its assistance with this and the future PSSA-related process and have had meetings with the co-sponsors to help refine the information on measures

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.gs/docsarchive/Visitors/Information/Visiting%20South%20Georgia%2022-23.pdf>

contained in the new documents submitted to the IMO Sub-Committee on Navigation, Communications and Search and Rescue (NCSR), which will be held in May 2023.

**Canary Islands – sperm whales** – Efforts are ongoing to continue using Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs) to identify high risk areas to concentrate conservation and mitigation measures to reduce ship strike risk.

### **Database Update**

In the past year, there has been consistent use of the database by data providers and data users. During this time, maintenance updates have been made to the Portal to maintain functionality. There have been 30 new reports to the database and 55 reports have been processed. There are still at least 40 reports to process and have reviewed by the Data Review Group in the next year. During the past year, Australia provided the Australian Ship Strikes Database to be integrated into the IWC Global Ship Strikes Database. This resulted in over 200 ship strike reports either added to the database or updating 40 existing reports already in the database. The Data Manager thanks those involved in providing data and answering questions related to integrating the data into the database. The IWC Database has also contributed to the discussion on the NW Mediterranean PSSA and its records referring to this region have been undergoing an updating process.

The next large dataset that needs to be acquired is the United States data. In the coming weeks, the Data Manager will continue reaching out to dataset holders to meet and scope the ingestion of data. During the past year, work has been done to assess ship strikes involving sailing vessels and datasets related to those incidents. Future work will involve integrating the data collated by Fabian Ritter's survey published from 2012 on sailing vessel collisions and then additional data collated from yacht racing reports. Lastly, paper reports from David Laist's data collating work will be digitised and entered into the database. It should be noted that regardless of variations in data format and standardisation within the datasets, the Data Manager will take responsibility for the data processing into the database to lessen the effort load for the current data holders. Once the data have been ingested into the database, additional data sharing and analysis can occur.

Over the past year, there have been ten requests for data. These requests include several requests for ship strike data in the Mediterranean, two in the Caribbean and one in the Northeast Atlantic. Data requests for specific data on vessel type and reports where fluke damage was indicated were provided to support research and management work. Species and region data were provided to the Head of Statistics and Modelling to support the SC sub-committee on Implementation Simulation Trials work. Future work will consider a data platform on the IWC website to increase access and usage of high-level data. This could include a dashboard for data exploration and a graphical user interface to download high-level data to csv file.

### **Collaboration with other organisations**

Please see detailed engagement in the Cooperation with Other Organisations document [SC 69A O 02](#).

## **SC INPUT TO CC -- WORKPLAN**

The SSWG developed a new Ship Strikes Strategic Plan for the 2022-2032 (SC/68D/HIM/03) period based on the original with updates to both high-risk populations and areas, and the ongoing threat of ship strikes. The Ship Strikes Work Plan for 2020-2022 was further amended to cover the next intersessional term 2022-2024. The workplan outlines priority activities in support of the strategic plan's objectives, assigning timetables, and proposing roles and duties.

Both the new Ship Strikes Strategic Plan 2022-2032 and the proposed Workplan of the SSWG for 2022-2024 were endorsed by the CC at the 2022 meeting, which also supported the establishment of an Expert Panel and the funding application for the continuation of the Data Manager position. The plans were also welcomed and endorsed by the Scientific Committee at SC68D, which also recommended continued work to undertake the necessary research and analysis required to identify potential new high-risk areas.

The new Ship Strikes Strategic Plan 2022-2032 was endorsed by the Commission at IWC68.

## **QUESTIONS FOR THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE**

*The Scientific Committee is asked to provide:*

1. *Table 1 of Appendix 1 is made available on the IWC website. SC members are requested to review Table 1 and advise on any errors and omissions relevant to their areas.*

## ANNEX

### Appendix 1.

Table A1. Ship strike reduction measures that have been implemented

Area	Measure	Whale species of most concern	Date implemented	More details
<b>Routing measures through TSS changes (mandatory to the extent that TSS rules apply)</b>				
Canada, East Coast, Bay of Fundy	Relocation of TSS	North Atlantic right whale	2003	Implemented through IMO
Spain, Mediterranean, Cabo de Gata	Relocation of TSS	Important area for several species	2006	Implemented through IMO
Spain, Strait of Gibraltar/Alboran Sea	Relocation of TSS	Important area for several species	2006	Implemented through IMO
USA, East Coast, MA, approaches to Boston	Narrowing and relocation of TSS	Important area for several species.	2009	Implemented through IMO
USA, West Coast, CA, Channel Islands	Relocation of TSS	Blue whale	2012	Implemented through IMO
USA, West Coast, CA, approaches to San Francisco	Extension of TSS	Blue whale	2012	Implemented through IMO
Panama, Pacific approaches to Panama Canal	Relocation of TSS	Humpback whale	2014	Implemented through IMO (COLREG.2/Circ.65) based on Nav 59/3
<b>Routing measures through Areas To Be Avoided</b>				
Canada, East Coast, Nova Scotia	Roseway Basin, seasonal ATBA, 1 Jun - 31 Dec	North Atlantic right whale	2008	Implemented through IMO (Vessels >300GT)
USA, East Coast, MA	Great South Channel, seasonal ATBA, 1 Apr - 31 Jul	North Atlantic right whale	2009	Implemented through IMO (Vessels >300GT)
<b>Recommended routes (voluntary) e.g. requested by port or regional authorities or implemented by shipping companies)</b>				
Argentina, Province of Chubut	Golfo Nuevo, Peninsula Valdes	Southern right whale	Updated 2010	
USA, East Coast, GA	Approaches to Brunswick	North Atlantic right whale	2006	<a href="http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/shipstrike/">http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/shipstrike/</a>
USA, East Coast, FL	Approaches to Jacksonville	North Atlantic right whale	2006	<a href="http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/shipstrike/">http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/shipstrike/</a>
USA, East Coast, FL	Approaches to Fernandina	North Atlantic right whale	2006	<a href="http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/shipstrike/">http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/shipstrike/</a>
USA, West Coast, Ala	Glacier Bay National Park	Humpback whale	Updated 2013	
Canada, East Coast	Gulf of St Lawrence. Avoidance area	Beluga, minke, blue, humpback, fin	2013	<a href="http://www.thesolutionsjournal.com/node/237427">http://www.thesolutionsjournal.com/node/237427</a>
Greece, Hellenic Trench (Hellenic Trench IMMA)	Avoidance of areas off Peloponnese and Crete	Sperm whales	2022	Implemented as voluntary measure by some shipping companies <a href="https://www.msc.com/en/news/2022-january/msc-takes-action-to-save-endangered-whales">https://www.msc.com/en/news/2022-january/msc-takes-action-to-save-endangered-whales</a>
Sri Lanka, south of Dondra Head	Avoidance of areas close to the coast	Blue whales	2023	Implemented as voluntary measure by some shipping companies
<b>Speed restrictions</b>				

USA, East Coast, MA	Cape Cod Bay SMA, 1 Jan - 15 May	North Atlantic right whale	2008, renewed in 2013	Mandatory 10 knots for vessels >65ft LOA <a href="http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/shipstrike/">http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/shipstrike/</a>
USA, East Coast, MA	Race Point SMA, 1 Mar - 30 April	North Atlantic right whale	2008, renewed in 2013	Mandatory 10 knots for vessels >65ft LOA
USA, East Coast, MA	Great South Channel SMA, 1 May - 31 Jul	North Atlantic right whale	2008, renewed in 2013	Mandatory 10 knots for vessels >65ft LOA
USA, East Coast (mid Atlantic)	Six individual SMAs, 1 Nov -30 Apr	North Atlantic right whale	2008, renewed in 2013	Mandatory 10 knots for vessels >65ft LOA
USA, East Coast, GA and FL	Brunswick, Fernandina, Jacksonville SMAs, 15 Nov - 15 Apr	North Atlantic right whale	2008, renewed in 2013	Mandatory 10 knots for vessels >65ft LOA
USA, West Coast, Alaska	Glacier Bay National Park, localised, seasonal	Humpback whale		Mandatory 10 knots in some areas, 13 in others <a href="http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CFR-2012-title36-vol1/pdf/CFR-2012-title36-vol1-sec13-1174.pdf">http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CFR-2012-title36-vol1/pdf/CFR-2012-title36-vol1-sec13-1174.pdf</a>
USA, East Coast	Dynamic Management Areas, established when concentrations of whales observed	North Atlantic right whale	2002	Voluntary 10 knots for vessels >65ft LOA
Gulf of St Lawrence, Canada	Seasonal 10 knot speed restrictions		2017 onwards	A number of areas with seasonal or temporary mandatory speed restrictions for vessels > 13m <a href="https://tc.canada.ca/en/marine-transportation/navigation-marine-conditions/protecting-north-atlantic-right-whales-collisions-vessels-gulf-st-lawrence">https://tc.canada.ca/en/marine-transportation/navigation-marine-conditions/protecting-north-atlantic-right-whales-collisions-vessels-gulf-st-lawrence</a>
USA, West Coast, CA	Shipping lanes into Los Angeles and Long	Blue whale		Recommended 10 knots when whales present
Spain	Strait of Gibraltar, Apr - Aug	Sperm whale	2007	Recommended 13 knots, endorsed by IMO
Argentina, Province of Chubut	Golfo Nuevo, Peninsula Valdes	Southern right whale		Recommended 10 knots
Panama	10 knot seasonal speed restriction, Pacific approaches to Panama Canal	Humpback whales	2013	Recommendation, endorsed by IMO, Nav 59/3
Gulf of St Lawrence, Canada	Recommended speed reduction	Beluga, minke, blue, humpback, fin	2014	<a href="http://www.thesolutionsjournal.com/node/237427">http://www.thesolutionsjournal.com/node/237427</a>
Hauraki Gulf, Ports of Auckland, New Zealand	10 knot speed recommendation	Bryde's whale	2015	<a href="https://www.poal.co.nz/community-environment/Documents/HaurakiGulf_voluntary_protocol.pdf">https://www.poal.co.nz/community-environment/Documents/HaurakiGulf_voluntary_protocol.pdf</a>
Port of Duqm, Oman	10 knot speed recommendation	Arabian Sea humpback whale	2016	<a href="https://www.portduqm.com/Media/News-and-Events/Rare-">https://www.portduqm.com/Media/News-and-Events/Rare-</a>

				<a href="https://www.gov.gs/docsarchive/Visitors/Information/Visiting%20South%20Georgia%2022-23.pdf">humpback-whales-collisions-can-be-prevented-in-Oman.html</a>
South Georgia/Islas Georgias del Sur	Voluntary 10 knot speed restriction for 2022/23 austral summer expedition vessel season implemented by Government of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands		2022	<a href="https://www.gov.gs/docsarchive/Visitors/Information/Visiting%20South%20Georgia%2022-23.pdf">https://www.gov.gs/docsarchive/Visitors/Information/Visiting%20South%20Georgia%2022-23.pdf</a>

Table A2. Ship strike areas of particular concern where measures (or further measures) may be considered in the future.

Area	Measure	Whale species of most concern		More details
Sri Lanka, south coast	Additional offshore TSS	Blue whale		MEPC 69/10/3
Spain, Canary Islands	PSSA and associated routing	Sperm whale		MEPC 69/10/3
USA, West Coast, CA	Further changes to TSS	Blue whale		See IWC Scientific Committee report 2015 and Irvine et al. 2014 <sup>2</sup>
NW Mediterranean, Pelagos Sanctuary and cetacean migration corridor (including the North-West Mediterranean Sea, Slope and Canyon IMMA)	PSSA proposal	Fin whale and sperm whale		MEPC79/10. Proposal by France, Monaco, Spain and Italy on 'Designation of a particular sensitive sea area in the North-Western Mediterranean Sea to protect cetaceans from international shipping'. Will be further considered at MEPC 80 in July 2023.

<sup>2</sup> Irvine, L.M., Mate, B.R., Winsor, M.H., Palacios, D.M., Bograd, S.J., Costa, D.P. and Bailey, H. 2014. Spatial and temporal occurrence of blue whales off the US west coast, with implications for management. PLoS ONE 9(7): 1-10.