

NG/JAC/27898

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CIRULAR COMMUNICATION TO COMMISSIONERS
AND CONTRACTING GOVERNMENTS
IWC.CCG.140

2000/2001 SOWER Circumpolar Cruise: Blue Whale Component

I would like to report back to you on the situation with respect to the blue whale component of the 2000/2001 SOWER Circumpolar Cruise.

In August this year, a Circular Communication (RG/JAC/27840) was distributed inviting Member Governments to consider making individual donations to the IWC Research Fund to allow the blue whale component of the cruise, proposed by the Scientific Committee at IWC52, to take place. The Governments of the UK, Denmark and Grenada kindly contributed (£15,000, £1,500 and £500 respectively). The Government of Japan, in addition to providing two vessels and two researchers, had already committed a further £20,000 towards the basic cruise.

At the recent SOWER planning meeting in Tokyo, the planning group concluded that rather than include blue whale acoustic studies in the cruise as originally proposed by the Scientific Committee, it would be better to use the funds for (1) archiving and examining the blue whale acoustic data already obtained from previous cruises, and (2) holding a 4-day workshop to review the sounds, reappraise the value of acoustics in distinguishing between true blues and pygmy blues, and make recommendations for future acoustic work to address the sub-species issue. The UK, Denmark and Grenada agreed for their donations to be used in this way.

The driving factor in proposing this alternative work (work which was also suggested by the Scientific Committee in Adelaide) is that previous data suggest that few blue whales will be encountered in the main area to be covered by the cruise.

If you would like further details, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Dr. Nicky Grandy
Secretary to the Commission

