

Report of the Conservation Committee Planning Group (CCPG)

Thursday 5 October 2023

Held virtually, 10:00 BST (UK time)

1. Welcome and aims of the meeting

The Chair of the Conservation Committee (CC) Catherine Bell opened the meeting and welcomed all participants. Members of the Secretariat were appointed as rapporteurs.

The Chair drew attention to the Terms of Reference (Annex A) for annual Conservation Committee Planning Group (CCPG) meetings, which were endorsed at IWC66 in 2016. The Chair recalled that this is the first meeting of this group since the Conservation Committee at IWC68 (2022). This meeting would provide updates and discuss progress from the intersessional period and then focus on planning the agenda for the Conservation Committee meeting in September 2024 and developing a new workplan for beyond IWC69.

2. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda (Annex B) was adopted. The list of participants is given at Annex C and a list of documents available to the meeting is at Annex D.

3. Progress Updates from Intersessional Working Groups since IWC68

a) Update from Standing Working Groups

Standing Working Group (SWG) Chairs were invited to give brief updates on their topics, and comments from participants were provided. Further details of the discussions can be found in the reports and are summarised below.

i. Bycatch Mitigation Initiative

The Bycatch SWG Chair (Svoboda, Netherlands) thanked the Secretariat's Bycatch Coordinator (Passadore) for the extensive work and provided a few highlights of the BMI's recent work detailed in the update report CCPG_OCT23_02. A lot of progress has been made on the implementation of the 2021–2024 work plan, which is now on the last year of work. The IWC's FAO/GEF tuna II Capsule Project is underway, and the Secretariat attended the inception and 6-month Project Steering group meetings. There has also been important engagement with regional fisheries management organisations (RFMOs), including the Scientific Committee meeting of WCPFC, and the IOTC's Working Party on Ecosystems and Bycatch meetings. Since 2022, the Secretariat has been focussing on developing the Peruvian Pilot Project. The team of experts chosen as consultants signed the contract in September 2023. The final product will be presented to the Secretariat and the Peruvian government in December 2023. Additionally, the Bycatch Coordinator attended the kick-off meeting in Amsterdam in September 2023 for the LIFE- Coordinated Development and Implementation of Best Practice in Bycatch Reduction in the North Atlantic, Baltic and Mediterranean Regions (CIBBRiNA) project.

In 2023- 2024, the focus will be on the implementation of pilot projects, progress the IWC's capsule in the Common Oceans ABNJ Program -Tuna project and organise capacity building trainings as requested. A new workplan will be developed for presentation to the next CC meeting in 2024. The Chair thanked the Bycatch SWG for their work and invited CCPG participants to reflect on emerging issues related to BMI that could be included in the future workplan of the Bycatch SWG.

ii. Conservation Management Plans

Griffin (Australia) introduced himself as the new co-Chair for the CMP programme. Griffin presented the report CCPG_OCT23_03, where updates are provided for all CMPs and priority populations. Further details can be found in the reports that were presented at SC69A and referenced in the CCPG progress report. Two funding proposals are under review for the CMP Programme, firstly for entanglement response capacity building to be held in Tierra del Fuego for the southeastern Pacific and southwest Atlantic right whale CMPs and secondly for coordination and activities of the southeastern Pacific CMP. Griffin stated that the focus for the SWG in the next year will be to review the group's membership, develop the new workplan, as well as implement the activities remaining for the last year of our current workplan. These activities include talking to CMP coordinators to develop the CMP newsletter and look at possible avenues for fundraising.

Staniland (Secretariat) inquired about the CMP Handbook, to which Griffin responded that they have a version that will be worked on in the coming year, and that the topic leadership expects to present at the IWC69 CC meeting. The Handbook captures all useful, relevant information in one document. This will be made available to all governments with the aim to increase awareness and understanding of the CMP Programme while also strengthening the communication and cooperation between CC and SC CMP groups regarding the CMP development process.

iii. Ship Strikes

Livermore (Chair, and IFAW) provided an outline for the Ship Strikes SWG composition. It has a newly formed Expert Panel; a wider correspondence group and the ship strike data review and ship routing groups that have now been merged. The Expert Panel met for the first time in July 2023 and hope to meet quarterly. A few key points from the report were highlighted, including the high priority areas (Northwest Mediterranean, Balearics and Canary Islands). The global ship strikes database has approximately 87 reports that need reviewing. Additionally, reports from strike incidents from sailing vessels have been shared with IWC. These reports will be reviewed and included in the database. Livermore thanked Australia for submitting their ship strikes database and asks other member countries to consider doing the same. A new workplan will be developed for the 2025-2028 period, they will present it and ask for endorsement at CC next year.

Staniland intervened to thank Fortuna for reviewing and correcting Italian and Pelagos Sanctuary records included in the ship strikes database.

iv. Whale Watching

Given that the Whale Watching SWG Chair (Wulff, USA) was unable to attend the meeting, the Secretariat (Webster) provided a few highlights of the WW SWG recent work. Details can be found in the progress report (CCPG_OCT_23_05). The Secretariat is interested in growing the content of the WW handbook. Any additional case studies, updates, or publications to add to the literature area are welcomed. The Secretariat has reconnected with the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA). This was mainly concerning the WW Network that was established as a product from the [2016 WW workshop](#). The Secretariat is in discussion to see how to move forward in a way that is beneficial to both organisations. The IORA-WW network will now be led by France and an NGO based in Reunion Island, IWC will contribute to the newsletter later this year with an article. Depending on how the discussions go, a webpage on the IORA-WW Network could be added to the WW Handbook. Additionally, to increase the use of the WW Handbook, Porter (SC Vice Chair) has assembled a team of volunteers to translate the handbook for SE Asia.

The SWG membership was reviewed and refreshed, and now includes members from South America and Industry representatives. The SWG needs a new Chair, if interested please let the Secretariat know. Over the rest of the intersessional period, in response to an SC recommendation, the SWG will

conduct a comprehensive review of the outputs of the current Strategic Plan. The outputs of the review will then be used in the development and drafting of the new 10-year Strategic Plan.

b) Reports from Intersessional Correspondence Groups (ICGs)

i. Anthropogenic Underwater Noise

There was no verbal update at the meeting; details can be found in the report (CCPG_OCT23_06).

ii. Joint SC-CC Marine Debris

Simmonds (co-lead with Warrie, Belgium) noted that the document provided for the meeting (CCPG_OCT23_07) has an excellent summary of the marine debris work. The ICG had a formal virtual meeting in September. It was suggested that the ICG be divided into three smaller groups looking at specific topics, including hotspots, fisheries, and strandings related information, in the context of the Marine Plastics Resolution. These groups will report back to the joint ICG and results will be shared with the SC and CC. The ICG is also looking at how to collaborate and relate to work with other organisations (i.e. ASCOBANS), which was directed as part of the Resolution.

iii. Cetaceans and Ecosystem functioning

Galletti (Topic lead, Chile) shared results from the Advisory Group (AG) that was established in January, composed of ecologists and economists to develop the draft tender for the Pilot Project. Galletti highlighted the detailed reports that have been presented to SC, and those that were shared for this meeting (CCPG_OCT23_08, CCPG_OCT23_15). It was emphasised that this has been a difficult process, particularly distinguishing between ecosystem functioning and services and deciding whether to value them as part of the pilot project or instead focus on establishing a framework to be utilised as a valuation approach. The AG has a list of potential species for the pilot project, but this and the draft tender will be revisited after the IWC SC-CMS Workshop on Ecosystem modelling, happening in Bonn in November 2023.

The Chair thanked the Topic Lead for their perseverance in the subject, acknowledging how difficult this area of work is.

iv. Joint SC-CC Climate Change

Simmonds (Topic lead) introduced paper CCPG_OCT23_09. Key points included attending the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) Climate Change workshop with Stainland and the ICG plans to meet at the end of 2023 to discuss new literature, and proposals that members might want to bring forward. There are also possibilities of collaborating with the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), who will be considering climate change at its next Meeting of the Parties (Feb 2024).

Rennel (CMS) confirmed that CMS is looking to reestablish the Climate Change working group if agreed by their Parties. There is the possibility of working with IWC on this topic if it is reestablished. The Chair notes that the IWC is keen to collaborate with CMS.

v. Chemical Pollution

The Chemical Pollution ICG did not present a report to the CCPG or to SC69A. The Chair asked the CCPG for their thoughts on the future of this ICG, specifically whether it should remain open given the lack of activity in recent years. Simmonds expressed concern over closing the ICG and recommends asking the SC for recommendations on what the CC- Chemical Pollution ICG should do. Staniland notes

that the SC has not recently made any recommendations to the CC regarding chemical pollution. He suggests disbanding the ICG while maintaining Chemical Pollution as a component of the CC Strategic Plan. The ICG may reconvene if the SC makes a recommendation. The ICG might shift to focus on a more specific topic, such as One Health. Simmonds suggests sending a request to the SC for details on what the CC can do in response to their results. The Chair concurs and suggests that the matter be discussed at the next CC-SC meeting in 2024.

4. Preparation for IWC69

a) Draft Conservation Committee agenda (CCPG_OCT23_10)

The Chair noted that in accordance with what was agreed in IWC68, the upcoming CC meeting will be virtual and approximately two weeks before the Commission meeting. Dates have not been finalised for IWC69 but will be held in Lima, Peru towards the end of September. Therefore, the CC meeting will be held approximately two weeks before the Commission meeting to give participants enough time for their travel arrangements. The Chair asks the Planning Group to consider the virtual format, number of sessions, time zones that will be needed when organising and developing the CC agenda and format.

Rennel mentions that the CMS MOP is also planned for September, therefore asks to consider other intergovernmental organisations (IGOs)/ Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) meetings to avoid overlap in dates. Webster reminds participants that the CC met virtually in 2020, for a week in two-hour sessions every day. With a considerably cut agenda, most of the discussion was done in comment sheets shared online beforehand. Certain topics were discussed virtually only if needed. Langerock (Belgium) notes that the CC will not be the only IWC committee meeting virtually, therefore the CC must align with the rest of the IWC Committees to avoid overlap. However, if possible, Belgium would prefer to have the meeting format reflect a traditional in-person meeting. This could mean having it split into two or three days and encourage engagement by having most discussions online instead of on comment sheets (this avoids potential discussions happening at Commission).

The Chair thanked those that intervened and noted that more thought is needed before deciding on the final format.

i. Sanctuary review

Staniland reminded participants that the Southern Ocean Sanctuary was established in 1994. The Schedule states that it should be reviewed every ten years. Therefore, 2024 will be the third decadal review. Most of the review will be carried out at SC69B. The review process requires the collation of relevant documents. Two Circulars have been sent out soliciting information via an online form (<https://forms.office.com/e/qWDVfn2xf0>).

The form will remain open during the remainder of the intersessional period until March 2024, to be included in the final paper submitted to the Southern Ocean Sanctuary Review Panel. The Panel encourages CCPG members to spread the word and to submit relevant information through the form. Additionally, the form also requests information about research in the Indian Ocean Sanctuary that will be reviewed if the Commission requests it.

ii. BBNJ (CCPG_OCT23_11)

Webster summarised the Secretariat's paper, which contained information on the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and the High Seas Treaty. The aim of the paper is to provide background information on both treaties and ways in which the IWC could contribute. The paper

includes activities under the IWC that already contribute, directly or indirectly, to the treaty's objectives. Webster then asked the CCPG to consider if and how the CC should engage with the treaties.

The Chair commented on how useful the paper was, particularly the tables highlighting how different agreements and organisations can work together to reach targets, specifically from the perspective of Contracting Governments and supported bringing this topic to the CC. Staniland agreed and added that it does not have to be a difficult task because the CC Strategic Plan may contain areas of overlap that can already be considered. It could also help the standing of the CC as Contracting Governments can see how their work in IWC also helps achieve other international agreements. The Chair finalises the section by agreeing to discuss this at CC, with a similar report to help support the discussion.

iii. Dates for virtual Conservation Committee meeting

The Chair reiterated that IWC69 will most likely take place in the last week of September. The Secretariat will check for other environmental organisations meetings to avoid overlap of dates. Staniland requests that if CCPG members know of other meetings, please let the Secretariat know.

b) Conservation Committee Strategic Plan and workplan

i. Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and the Conservation Committee (CCPG_OCT23_11)

This discussion was closely linked to the previous section about the GBF. The Secretariat (Webster) suggested presenting the paper at Bern III. The focus of the meeting will be identifying areas that MEAs can work together and develop cooperations and collaborations to implement the framework more effectively. The IWC could potentially look at other organisations to collaborate with, similar to the agreements with CMS or the BLG. The Chair agrees and adds that, in addition to collaborating, the IWC could identify internal activities that help other organisations achieve their goals.

ii. Standardising CC topic Terms of Reference

The Chair reminded CCPG members that all SWG and ICGs should have standardised Terms of Reference (ToR) as part of the Working Group of Operational Effectiveness (WGOE) process. To ensure consistency, they should be presented at CC in 2024. As a result, the Chair suggested that the Chairs and Topic Leads of the SWGs and ICGs review their ToRs to ensure that all information outlined in the CC working methods is included. Particularly in light of the new joint CC-SC ICGs.

The Secretariat added that if any group requires their most recent ToRs or any other assistance, they should contact the Secretariat.

c) Database of recommendations

The Secretariat prepared two documents (CCPG_OCT23_12 and CCPG_OCT23_16) that show the proposed process on when and how to close recommendations in the Database of Recommendations. This process has already been implemented and shared at SC69A and the CC-SC meeting earlier this year. During the intersessional period before the CC meeting, the Secretariat will prepare spreadsheets for each SWG and ICG with their recommendations so that leads and group members can review progress. If the progress is marked as completed, superseded by another recommendation, or draw attention (i.e. no particular action) they will be included in a list to be closed. After leads have reviewed which recommendations can be closed, these will be presented to the CC and Commission in 2024 for endorsement.

Document CCPG_OCT_12 is a spreadsheet of CC recommendations since 2016. Most of these were reviewed as part of the Midterm Review of the Conservation Committee Strategic Plan conducted in 2022, and progress is marked. Therefore, it's mainly the recommendations from 2022 that need to be checked and updated with progress. The Secretariat will be in touch with the topic chairs and leads over the next few months to begin the process.

d) Conservation Database update

The Secretariat has been progressing the Conservation Database. The focus for the next year will be to advance what was agreed at CC at IWC68. This involves working with Australia to adopt the SC process for the National Progress reports for the CC and also test the existing conservation database prototype with volunteers that include New Zealand, the UK and ASCOBANS. The Secretariat encourages any other country to volunteer if they are interested.

5. Conservation Committee Finance

a) Finance updates

The Secretariat (Bartmeier) presented paper CCPG_OCT23_13 which summarised the current status of the Voluntary Conservation Fund (VCF). The IWC received £227k in contributions, mainly for the CMP and Bycatch programmes. Expenditure has been on travel arrangements for the ship strikes Database Manager to attend SC69A, bycatch risk assessment training in Colombia, and southwest Atlantic right whale CMP project funding.

Staniland thanks countries for donating to the Voluntary Conservation Fund and reminds CCPG participants that the CC runs solely on voluntary contributions as it has no core funding.

b) Upcoming funding proposals

The Chair stated that there are two funding proposals for the CMP programme, one for the southwest Atlantic and one for the southeast Pacific right whale CMPs. There may also be a proposal for funding the Data Manager position presented at CC. There are no other current or upcoming funding proposals.

6. Engagement with other organisations

Staniland notes that there are numerous resolutions and recommendations to strengthen IWC's engagement with other organisations, and the CCPG_OCT23_14 paper summarises the cooperation related to themes within the CC Strategic Plan. Staniland thanks the Programme Development team within the Secretariat for their hard work.

Some of the activities that were highlighted were the FAO- factsheets that support the technical guidelines to reduce marine mammal bycatch, the GEF/FAO tuna II project, CAMAC capacity building in the Caribbean for marine mammals strandings, revision of the International Maritime Organization (IMO)- 2014 Underwater Radiated Noise Guidelines and the proposal for a Particularly Sensitive Sea Area (PSSA) in the northwest Mediterranean. The Secretariat and other members of the IWC have participated in meetings of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). It is challenging, given the IWC's limited resources, but the Secretariat will continue to work on ways to maximise impact by seeking collaboration wherever possible. There's been a great deal of work with CMS and its daughter agreements. Additionally, there have been several recommendations in the past from the CC and the SC concerning engagement with IORA, and after several attempts at contact, the Secretariat arranged a call to make introductions and start discussions.

Staniland notes that the Secretariat has also been working with RFMOs, and any suggestions on how to improve engagement with them would be welcomed. Langerock remembers that the Bycatch SWG discussed this at a meeting in September 2021 and there was a lot of good suggestions. The Chair also suggested discussing this at CC as there might be Contracting Governments that can speak in support of IWC at RFMO meetings.

O'Connell (AWI) asks about IWC's work with CCAMLR. Staniland provided a summary on their work regarding humpback whale bycatch in krill fisheries. Belgium will be joining CCAMLR meeting later this year and volunteers to report on IWC there and back.

7. Conservation Committee positions

The Chair noted that the Conservation Committee's work is dependent on the SWG and ICG chairs and topic leads and expresses gratitude to everyone for all that has been done and continues to be done intersessionally. The Chair also asks to please let the CC leadership and the Secretariat know if any positions will become vacant. Currently the WW SWG Chair position is looking for a replacement.

The Chair also informed the CCPG that the CC leadership will be transferred to Collier (UK) as she is no longer working as a government official and therefore will be stepping down. Collier introduced himself and shared his enthusiasm for working with the IWC.

CCPG and the Secretariat thanked Bell for her enthusiastic work in the CC and IWC, first as the CC Vice Chair followed by her work as CC Chair.

8. Any other business

There were no further comments, and the Chair thanked all those who joined and participated in the meeting and closed the meeting at 11:35. The report was adopted by correspondence.

Annex A. Terms of Reference for annual Conservation Committee Planning Group meeting

The Conservation Committee Planning Group is tasked with helping set the agenda for the biennial Conservation Committee meeting and progression of the Conservation Committees work plan in the intersessional period.

It will:

- Consider the Committee's progress since the last meeting of the Committee, in particular with regards to intersessional work, and support continued effective delivery of its work.
- Identify key discussions, priorities and deliverables for inclusion on the agenda of the next meeting of the Committee.
- Support the Chair in preparing for Conservation Committee meetings.
- Provide an additional opportunity for discussing the strategic development of the Conservation Committee, particularly with regards its outward facing strategic plan, strategic development of priorities, engagement with other organisations, and funding.

Membership

The group is intended to be small and focused and does not replace a full meeting of the Conservation Committee. Attendance is not restricted but may be limited by available space. It will primarily be composed of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Conservation Committee, Chairs of the Committee's standing working groups, and nominees from contracted governments. Additional expertise will be invited as appropriate to the agenda by the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Conservation Committee. The meeting will be Chaired by the Chair of the Conservation Committee.

Timings

The Conservation Committee planning meeting should meet at least annually and where possible in conjunction with meetings of the Scientific and/or Conservation Committee to ensure best use of resources.

Annex B. Agenda

- 1. Welcome and aims of the meeting**
 - a. Appointment of Chair [Cat Bell is proposed]
 - b. Appointment of Rapporteur [The Secretariat will offer to act as rapporteur]
 - c. Terms of Reference and aims of the meeting
 - d. Review of documents available to the meeting
- 2. Adoption of the agenda**
- 3. Progress Updates from Intersessional Working Groups since IWC68**
 - a. Reports from SWGs
 - i. Bycatch Mitigation Initiative
 - ii. Conservation Management Plans
 - iii. Ship Strikes
 - iv. Whale watching
 - b. Reports from ICGs
 - i. Anthropogenic Underwater Noise
 - ii. Marine Debris
 - iii. Socio-economic value of the roles of cetaceans
 - iv. Chemical pollution
 - v. Climate change
- 4. Preparation for IWC69**
 - a. Draft Conservation Committee agenda
 - i. Sanctuary review
 - ii. BBNJ
 - iii. Dates for virtual Conservation Committee meeting
 - b. Conservation Committee Strategic Plan and workplan
 - i. Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and the Conservation Committee
 - ii. Standardising CC topic Terms of Reference
 - c. Database of recommendations
 - d. Conservation Database update
- 5. Finance**
 - a. Finance Updates
 - b. Upcoming funding proposals
- 6. Engagement with other organisations**
- 7. Conservation Committee positions**
- 8. Any other business**

Annex C. List of participants

Argentina

Miguel Iñíguez Bessega (CC- Vice Chair)

Australia

Chris Griffin

Belgium

Stephanie Langerock

Chile

Barbara Galletti

Netherlands

Anne-Marie Svoboda

Verna de Groes

UK

Cat Bell (CC-Chair)

Jack Collier

Animal Welfare Institute (AWI)

Kate O'Connell

Centro de Conservacion Cetacea (CCC)

Elsa Cabrera

CMS/ASCOBANS

Jenny Renell

Fundación Cethus

Carolina Cassani

International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW)

Sharon Livermore

OceanCare

Mark Simmonds

World Wildlife Fund (WWF)

Colman O Criodain

IWC Secretariat

Elizabeth Campbell

Iain Staniland

Imogen Webster

MoussaKi Sow

Nikki Bartmeier

Cecilia Passadore

Kate Wilson

Annex D. List of documents

Document Number	Title	Authors
CCPG_OCT_23_01	Draft Annotated Agenda	
Primary papers		
CCPG_OCT_23_02	Update from the Bycatch Standing Working Group	Bycatch Standing Working Group
CCPG_OCT_23_03	Update from the Standing Working Group on Conservation Management Plans (CMPs)	Standing Working Group on Conservation Management Plans
CCPG_OCT_23_04	Update from the Ship Strikes Standing Working Group	S Livermore (Chair), L O'Loughlin (Data Manager)
CCPG_OCT_23_05	Update from the Whale Watching Standing Working Group	Whale Watching Standing Working Group
CCPG_OCT_23_06	Report of the intersessional work on Anthropogenic Underwater Noise	AUNICG
CCPG_OCT_23_07	Update from the Joint CC/SC Intersessional Correspondence Group on Marine Debris	M Simmonds and J Warrie
CCPG_OCT_23_08	Chair's Notes on the Draft Tender	B Galletti
CCPG_OCT_23_09	Update from the Joint CC/SC Intersessional Correspondence Group on Climate Change	M Simmonds
CCPG_OCT_23_10	Draft Conservation Committee agenda for September 2024	
CCPG_OCT_23_13	Update on Conservation Committee Finance	IWC Secretariat
CCPG_OCT_23_14	Update to the CCPG on the Cooperation with other Organisations	IWC Secretariat
CCPG_OCT_23_15	Draft Invitation to Tender Contracted Expert/Team/Organization to conduct the pilot project to assess the socioeconomic value of the ecosystem services provided by cetaceans	
CCPG_OCT_23_16	Examples of how to present Recommendations to be closed	IWC Secretariat
Working papers		
CCPG_OCT_23_11	Background document on the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and the International treaty on Sustainable use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction	IWC Secretariat
CCPG_OCT_23_12	Conservation Committee Recommendations (extracted from the Database of Recommendations)	
For INFO papers		
SC_69A_EM_02_rev2	Progress report on the work of the Advisory Group of the Conservation Committee Cetacean and Ecosystem Functioning Working Group	