

## Update from the Standing Working Group on Conservation Management Plans (CMP)

### INTRODUCTION

The Standing Working Group on Conservation Management Plans (SWG) has continued to implement the actions in the CMP Work Plan, which was endorsed by the Commission at IWC68. The IWC's CMP program continues to develop and remains a unique and effective model for generating and maintaining range state support for at-risk cetacean populations globally. There are five existing CMPs that continue to progress, the most recent being the South American River dolphin CMP endorsed by the Commission at the 2021 Virtual Special Meeting. There are four populations that have been deemed high priority for CMP development by the Scientific Committee (SC). While interest in the CMP program from IWC members remains strong, continuity of funding is a key challenge.

### PROGRESS ON CURRENT CMPS

*Amazon river dolphin* (2021) Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Brazil  
Coordinator: Fernando Trujillo (Colombia)

A CMP for Amazon River dolphins was endorsed by the SC at SC68C and agreed by the Commission at the Virtual Special Meeting in September 2021. The main objective of the CMP is to promote the conservation of river dolphin species (*Inia geoffrensis*, *Inia boliviensis*, *Inia araguaiaensis* and *Sotalia fluviatilis*) in the Amazon, Orinoco, and Tocantins/Araguaia basins through a regional strategy. The CMP will facilitate prioritisation of research and conservation actions among the different South American countries where these species live as well as guide national and regional actions. A coordinator has been appointed to manage delivery of CMP actions.

The South American river dolphin CMP has identified 32 actions in five thematic areas: Research (RES), Monitoring (MON), Mitigation (MIT), Public Awareness and Capacity Building (PACB) and Coordination (COORD). Between May 2022 and April 2023, progress was made on 26 (81.5%) actions across all thematic areas. Undoubtedly, the most outstanding was the workshop between governments of Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru, that allowed the analysis of policies and regulations aimed at reducing five main threats to river dolphins and also considered the socio-environmental conflicts in aquatic ecosystems inhabited by river dolphins.

One of the results of the workshop was to outline nine goals and several concrete actions that will allow progress to be made both in each country and at the regional level, taking advantage of available instruments, treaties and financial mechanisms.

Full details can be found in the latest report to SC ([SC/69A/CMP/24](#)).

*Franciscana dolphin* (2016) Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay  
Coordinator: Miguel Iñiguez (Argentina)

As part of the activities related to the Scientific Committee, a workshop to finalise the review of the status of the franciscana was held in Curitiba, Brazil (4-5 June 2022), the report was presented to SC69A ([SC/69A/REP/01](#)). The workshop included participants from all three countries, including representatives of government agencies and non-governmental organisations. The priority actions for the franciscana were reviewed and updated based on the results of this workshop.

The public awareness campaign "Our neighbour the franciscana" was launched during the 68th Meeting of the IWC. This campaign is one of the priority actions identified from the beginning and includes various materials (infographics, video, stickers, panels and posters). The information produced can be used by the three range states and is available in English, Portuguese and Spanish. It is also uploaded to the IWC website. A book *The Franciscana Dolphin: On the Edge of Survival* (2022) will also be useful for the future update of the CMP, as several of the actions identified by the IWC have been developed in this book.

*Western South Atlantic southern right whale* (2012) Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Uruguay

Coordinator: Many thanks to Juan Pablo Torres Flores for his leadership as the Coordinator and to Ingrid Oberg for taking on this role going forward.

The range states continue to collaborate closely on research and conservation efforts under this CMP. A CMP workshop was held in June 2022. Given new scientific information and the progress of some CMP actions, the goal of the workshop was to review and update the actions listed in the CMP (2016-2020). New actions were identified during the workshop, some previously proposed actions were noted as advanced, and other actions were identified as necessary, in some of the range states. Entanglement response training is on the agenda of SRW CMP. In September a group of Brazilian researchers will be trained as instructors in entanglement response in the USA. and a bi-national (Argentina-Chile) disentanglement workshop is planned to happen in Puerto Williams/Chile in November 2023 and is in process of getting funding through VCF. Finally, other actions were identified as important due to the lack of progress. In particular the development of a geographic information system and the subsequent generation of a risk map was identified as a priority action to begin as soon as possible. The full workshop report was presented to SC69A ([SC/69A/REP/05](#)).

*Eastern South Pacific southern right whale* (2012) Chile, Peru

Coordinator: Barbara Galletti

Research and conservation actions under this CMP continue, guided by a 2023-2024 implementation strategy and the MoU between Chile and Peru for protection of the population.

The progress report to SC69A ([SC/69A/CMP/22](#)) includes important advances that have been made since last year. This includes 1) completion of Passive Acoustic Monitoring project off Antofagasta, 2) training of Peruvian specialist in deployment and maintenance of acoustic equipment, 3) workshop on experience exchange on whale watching and research permits (item 6 in [CC/68/REP/RWCMP/01](#)), 4) virtual expert workshop to review historical and recent data ([CC/68/REP/SRW/01](#)), 5) fourth CMP coordination meeting ([CC/68/REP/RWCMP/01](#)), 6) completion of 6-year review and updated CMP version ([SC/69A/CMP/23](#)), and 7) increase collection of sighting records and photo-ID, including the northernmost sighting recorded to date for this population off Ecuador and the largest aggregation recorded off Isla de Chiloé.

The 2023 updated version is the third iteration of the CMP for this population. It was proposed that advances on CMP actions be reviewed annually and updated as needed but that a more thorough review should be conducted every six years.

Latest CMP version ([SC/69A/CMP/23](#))

*Western North Pacific gray whale* (2010)- Russia, USA, Republic of Korea, Mexico, Japan

Point of Contact: Dave Weller

Updates on research efforts were received from USA, Mexico, the Russian Federation and Japan at the last SC meeting (69A). The SC made several recommendations concerning these gray whales, however, it was noted that due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine an update to the CMP for western North Pacific gray whales has been indefinitely delayed.

### **PRIORITY POPULATIONS**

The SC can recommend that populations be treated as high priority for CMP development due to the conservation status of the population or species, and knowledge of threats. When this recommendation is made, range states and drafters can progress development of a draft CMP without first preparing a CMP nomination. The SC has made this recommendation for the following populations:

#### *Arabian Sea Humpback Whale*

Significant progress has been made on the development of a CMP for Arabian Sea humpback whales (ASHWs) that would be implemented jointly between the IWC and the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS). Despite complex issues with establishing a formal CMP, there is a clear commitment to the conservation of ASHWs from stakeholders and government agencies in Oman, India and other range countries. The work of the Arabian Sea Whale Network (ASWN) continues to serve as a key framework to facilitate communication between relevant parties and the creation a CMP. In February 2024 the CMS Conference of Parties will be asked to extend the Concerted Action for ASHWs, which is already serving as a basis for implementing tangible conservation measures and enhancing both general awareness and range wide collaboration. The Concerted Action's ultimate goal is the development and implementation of a regional CMP.

Latest report to SC ([SC/69A/CMP/04\\_Rev1](#)).

#### *Central American humpback whale*

Costa Rica, Mexico, Panama and the USA are progressing in the development of this CMP with the governments of Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua. The main objective of the CMP is to conserve the Central America humpback whale population and its habitat through collaborative regional actions to reduce anthropogenic threats throughout its range. Additional objectives include improving habitat connectivity and conservation and improving knowledge about population size, trends, movement patterns, and habitat use. To provide the range states with the scientific evidence and management tools to implement actions, a workshop was held in late October 2022 to consider the scientific aspects of this population including abundance, distribution, movements, migration, and genetics.

Latest report to SC ([SC/69A/CMP/08](#)).

#### *Mediterranean sperm whale*

Mediterranean sperm whales are listed as 'Endangered' in the IUCN Red List. The Scientific Committee of the International Whaling Commission has recommended in 2020, 2021 and 2022 that these species be treated as a 'priority population' for the purpose of the CMP development process. In addition to ship strikes, anthropogenic noise and bycatch, Mediterranean sperm whales are particularly vulnerable to marine litter. ACCOBAMS has adopted the IWC guidelines for its CMPs and is progressing development of the CMP. The Committee agreed at SC69A that consideration should be given to a joint ACCOBAMS/IWC CMP.

Range states include Albania, Algeria, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Italy, Libya, Malta, Monaco, Morocco, Spain, Tunisia and Turkey.

*Mediterranean fin whale*

ACCOBAMS is progressing development of the CMP and a draft version was presented to the Scientific Committee in 2023. The overall goal of the Mediterranean Fin Whale CMP is to manage human activities that affect fin whales in the Mediterranean Sea in order to maintain a favourable conservation status throughout their historical range, based on the best available scientific knowledge. The CMP includes eight sections, of which the first three provide background information including biology and status of the Mediterranean fin whale population. Funding must be found for this action at the earliest opportunity to appoint a Co-ordinator and set up the Steering Group to ensure that the CMP moves ahead in a timely fashion.

**UPDATE TO WORKPLAN AND STRATEGIC PLAN**

Progress is included in a column in the Table (Annex 1). It should be noted that the current plan is due to expire next year and a new workplan will need to be developed in preparation for the CC meeting in 2024. The Strategic plan endorsed at IWC68 will be used to guide this development along with a review of relevant SC and CC recommendations concerning CMPs.

**SWG MEMBERSHIP and Terms of Reference**

The SWG would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank Annie Robinson for her leadership, investment and dedication over many years. They welcome Chris Griffin (Australia) and Carolina Cassani (Fundacion Cethus) as the new Co-Chairs. The Co-Chairs have been working with the SWG and Secretariat to review membership and look at priority actions leading to the CC meeting next September.

There will also be a review of the Terms of Reference for the SWG (Annex 2) to ensure they are still relevant and appropriate and in line with other CC SWGs.

**QUESTIONS FOR THE CONSERVATION COMMITTEE**

The CCPG notes that the CMP workplan expires in 2024. A final progress report for the 2022-2024 period will be presented to the CC for adoption. In addition, a new workplan will be developed during this intersessional period and presented to CC for endorsement at IWC69.

## ANNEX 1

### CMP ACTION PLAN – OCT 2022-2024

Topic	Action	Sub-task	Timeframe	Responsible parties	Progress
<b>1. Seek a co-chair or program lead (for term 2022-24)</b>	<b>1.1.</b> Seek interest from the SWG-CMP and SC CMP Sub-committee members to take on a leadership role in the SWG-CMP (alongside the SWG-CMP Chair) to help drive and progress tasks, and provide support and advice to CMP coordinators.	<b>1.1.1.</b> Discuss and record roles and responsibilities for this role	Oct 2022 – March - 2023	SWG-CMP, Secretariat	Completed- It was announced at the CC/SC meeting May 2023 that Carolina Cassani (Fundacion Cethus) agreed to take the role of Co-chair with Australia
<b>2. Priority species for CMP development</b>	<b>2.1.</b> Publish an up-to-date list of CMP priority species (as recommended by the SC) on the IWC website.		Mar 2023	SWG-CMP	Arabian whale is listed, other species pending.
	<b>2.2.</b> Conduct outreach activities to prospective CMP proponents	<b>2.2.1.</b> Write to relevant range states to provide the CMP handbook and offer support from the SWG-CMP in CMP development.	Ongoing	SWG-CMP, Secretariat	
<b>3. Progress fundraising</b>	<b>3.1.</b> Work with the Secretariat's fundraising officer to identify opportunities and tools needed for CMP fundraising.	<b>3.1.1.</b> Update the concept note and develop any additional fundraising tools.	Sept 2023	SWG-CMP, Secretariat	The Secretariat has prepared the Concept note, needs to be updated.
		<b>3.1.2.</b> Identify discrete projects from existing CMPs that may benefit from fundraising.	Sep 2023	SWG-CMP	Possible funding for the Entanglement response training in Argentina and Chile – 2023.
<b>4. Better promotion of the CMP program and its achievements</b>	<b>4.1.</b> Develop and improve communication materials for CMPs	<b>4.1.1.</b> Continue an at-least annual newsletter for the CMP program	Next issue in 2022, then ongoing.	SWG-CMP, Secretariat	Postponed to late 2023- Secretariat planning for newsletter
		<b>4.1.2</b> Update CMP website to include achievements to date, case studies, pictures, events etc.	Ongoing	SWG-CMP, Secretariat	Postponed to early 2024. Secretariat will discuss with SWG chairs to see which CMP to highlight.
		<b>4.1.3</b> Identify opportunities for social media promotion			

## ANNEX 2

### Adopted IWC64

#### Terms of Reference Standing Working Group on Conservation Management Plans

The Standing Working Group on Conservation Management Plans (the CMP Working Group) is responsible for the provision of advice on the nomination, development and implementation of CMPs endorsed by the International Whaling Commission (IWC).

The CMP Working Group will be comprised primarily of members of the Conservation Committee, but will also include members from the Scientific Committee and members from other IWC bodies as appropriate, Commission members from range states and interested observers. The Chair will be elected from Group members and may hold the position for a period of up to four years.

The CMP Working Group will report to the IWC through the Conservation Committee.

Conservation Management Plans are intended to be a practical and flexible management tool for the IWC to manage human and cetacean interactions for those populations, threats or habitats of greatest conservation concern and where there is a reasonable expectation that the plan will deliver real conservation gains. The CMP Working Group will support development of comprehensive plans tailored to address the species, habitat or threats of the most pressing need and with the greatest likelihood of success.

Duties of the CMP Working Group may include, but are not limited to:

- Recommending priority cetacean populations, threats or habitats suitable for the preparation of a CMP.
- Providing up-to-date guidelines and templates to support the nomination, development, implementation and monitoring of CMPs.
- Establishing appropriate criteria to assess the merits of proposed CMPs.
- Providing appropriate guidance to proponents of CMPs to support best practice nomination, development and implementation.
  - Facilitating provision of data and expert advice from relevant IWC Committees and subcommittees, as appropriate.
- Reporting to the Conservation Committee on the status of existing CMPs.
- Advising the Commission, through the Conservation Committee, on funds or other resources requested to support the nomination, development, or implementation of a CMP.
- Undertaking other activities as directed by the Commission or Conservation Committee.

\*Draft terms of reference for the Group were published in IWC/63/CC5, but the Commission was not afforded sufficient time to give consideration to CMPs. The draft terms of reference were subsequently adopted at IWC64, see Chair's report p38.