

Follow up to Resolution 2022-1 – Next steps

Introduction

To follow-up on Resolution 2022-1 on Marine Debris, unanimously adopted at IWC68, Paper FA/69/6.1/01 collated different options provided by relevant experts within the Scientific Committee (SC) to identify the ways the SC could implement the resolution's language, especially OP5. This states the following:

“REQUESTS the Scientific Committee to develop an approach to be considered by the IWC that would assess the current knowledge of the impact of marine plastic pollution on cetaceans and would provide a global risk assessment that identifies ‘hotspots’ of cetacean exposure to plastic debris;”

Based on this F&A paper, this proposal was drafted with the following goals for the next intersessional period:

- Identify and review the most recent literature on the impact of marine plastic pollution on cetaceans;
- Lay the groundwork for the global risk assessment for the Commission's consideration.

Literature review

To progress the literature review, next compendium of SOCER will compile an inventory of literature on marine debris relating to cetaceans. Next into the Joint CC-SC Intersessional Correspondence Group on Marine Debris, who can summarize the contents of the selected papers and deliver a summary to IWC70.

Global risk assessment

To assess whether and in what form a global risk assessment may be delivered the following steps were identified of which the first will be the focus of the next intersessional period:

1. Determine the availability of data that could inform a global risk assessment on the impacts of marine plastic pollution on cetaceans including:
 - the nature, quantity and geographic distribution of existing data
 - identify opportunities to collate or collect substantial new data
2. Assess potential approaches to developing a global risk assessment given the likely distribution, quality and magnitude of available data together with any newly collated/collected data
3. Determine the likely utility of a global risk assessment given the approach identified and the limitations of the available data.
4. Proceed with data collation and collection and the risk assessment if:
 - It's determined the final product is likely to provide new insights into the regional impacts of plastics on cetaceans and that is likely to identify actions that are not evident to Commission now
 - Sufficient funding is available to deliver the risk assessment
 - The risk assessment can be delivered within a reasonable timeline and does not have trailing budgetary impacts.

Budgetary impact

£15k is required, allocated to the SC, to determine available data over the course of this intersessional period. The ICG will be tasked with following up on this process.

To speed up the process or expand on the work, Contracting Governments are invited to contribute voluntary funding to the SC or the voluntary conservation fund to also execute Step 2 of the aforementioned process.