

IWC CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLANS

Building collaborative partnerships to protect cetaceans

PROGRAM HANDBOOK AND STRATEGIC PLAN 2024 - 2032



INTERNATIONAL
WHALING COMMISSION

This is a working document subject to iterative review and ongoing adjustment

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ACRONYMS AND KEY TERMS

Cetaceans: Any member of an entirely aquatic group of mammals commonly known as whales, dolphins, and porpoises

CMP/s: Conservation Management Plan/s. A framework for countries to work together to protect and rebuild cetacean populations.

The CMP Process: The process of nominating and/or developing a CMP for presentation to the Scientific Committee, Conservation Committee, and Commission for advice, endorsement, and possible funding, followed by implementation by range states.

The CMP Program: The International Whaling Commission initiative that facilitates range state collaboration for conservation of cetacean populations.

The Commission: International Whaling Commission

Contracting Governments: Each IWC member country is known as a Contracting Government and represented by a Commissioner, who is assisted by experts and advisers.

ICRW: International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling

IWC: International Whaling Commission ('the Commission')

MoU: Memorandum of Understanding

NGO: Non-Governmental Organisation

Range State: Any nation that exercises jurisdiction over any part of a range which a species or population inhabits, or crosses at any time on its migration route.

SC-CMP: Sub-committee on Conservation Management Plans (Scientific Committee subsidiary group)

SWG-CMP: Standing Working Group on Conservation Management Plans (Conservation Committee subsidiary group)

VCF: Voluntary Conservation Fund

PARTICIPATING IWC MEMBERS (EXISTING CMPS)

Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru, Russia, South Korea, Uruguay, the United States of America

PARTNER AND SUPPORTING ORGANISATIONS



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Conservation Management Plan (CMP) program is an International Whaling Commission (IWC; the Commission) initiative, aimed at protecting and rebuilding vulnerable cetacean populations. CMPs facilitate collaboration between range states (countries with coastlines within the range of a cetacean population), and work towards the Conservation Committee's vision of *'healthy, well managed, and recovered cetacean populations worldwide.'*

Endorsed at IWC69, this document supports the governance, review and refinement of the CMP program to ensure it remains modern, informed, adaptable, and productive in contributing to the Conservation Committee's vision. It replaces the CMP Work Plan 2014 - 2020 and is managed by the Standing Working Group on Conservation Management Plans (SWG-CMP).

The handbook component of this document sets out the formal process for the development of CMPs. It aims to ensure timely CMP development, endorsement, implementation, and progress tracking. It acts as a guide for IWC Member governments (Contracting Governments) that share cetacean populations or species, on how to work together through the IWC to improve conservation outcomes.

The strategic plan establishes clear objectives to ensure the longevity of the CMP program, in line with the Conservation Committee's vision. This overarching strategy also sets a foundation for the ongoing development and maintenance of resources, templates and tools that support the program. The strategic plan will be implemented via a shorter term and more frequently updated action plan, including specific tasks and timeframes for progressing priority work areas.

CMPs are consistent with both the purpose and provisions of the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling by providing for the “proper and effective conservation and development of whale stocks.” Article V(1) of the Convention provides that the Commission may adopt measures with respect to the conservation of whale resources.

For enquiries about any elements of the CMP program or this document please contact the SWG-CMP Chair (Australian Government) at whales@awe.gov.au or the IWC Secretariat at secretariat@iwc.int



THE CMP PROGRAM

WHAT ARE CMPS?

Conservation Management Plans represent a collaborative partnership between range states for cetacean conservation.

Established by the IWC in 2008, the CMP program provides a mechanism for IWC member governments to work together towards conservation of their shared cetacean populations by addressing transboundary gaps in existing conservation measures. CMPs are science-driven and focus on practical management actions that have the greatest chance of achieving improvements in the recovery of cetacean populations. They are voluntary undertakings, and are intended to complement national legislation and management regimes in participating range states, not to replace domestic measures. Any at-risk cetacean populations whose range includes two or more states that are committed to collaboration can be candidates for a CMP, including small cetacean species.

Each CMP is different. Informed by current science, they can be tailored to the specific needs of a focussed cetacean population, or potentially to distinct regions encompassing a number of cetacean species and/or populations. They can provide a framework for regional neighbours to work together to address the common or shared threats that impact their cetacean populations. The uniting and essential component of CMPs is the strong scientific basis, and the active involvement of relevant governments (member and non-member), with support from other stakeholders. When CMPs are endorsed by the Commission, this means the science demonstrates that conservation action is needed, the range states have demonstrated a commitment to collaborating towards a shared goal, and the CMP is likely to be productive and effective.

CMPs are living documents that are reviewed and updated periodically based on monitoring of the populations concerned and assessment against measurable milestones. The process for developing a CMP involves a number of interrelated stages: nomination, development, endorsement by the Commission, implementation, monitoring and review. Each CMP has the full oversight and guidance from the IWC's Scientific Committee, widely recognised as the world-leading scientific body on matters associated with the conservation and management of whales. CMP participants have access to an international network of experts and modern scientific and conservation advice for the duration of the CMP. It also received support from the CC SWG on CMP where political commitment and progress of management actions are crucial in the success of the CMPs implementation.



WHY ARE CMPS NEEDED?

Prior to the 1982 global moratorium on commercial whaling, industrial-scale whaling severely reduced the populations of many of the world's cetaceans, some to near extinction. The moratorium has allowed for the gradual recovery of some cetacean populations, however they face additional complex threats to their survival and recovery including bycatch, habitat destruction, ship strikes, unregulated wildlife tourism, chemical waste and run-off, marine debris and plastics, and climate change.

Conservation of migratory or transboundary species, including many cetaceans species, is particularly challenging. Population health relies on consistent protection across domestic, political and international borders. It is especially difficult to establish accountability and governance for threats to migratory species in the marine environment where boundaries are not physically defined.

CMPS address these challenges by providing a coordinated and collaborative framework for countries within the range of vulnerable cetacean populations to work together to fill transboundary gaps in existing cetacean conservation measures (national and local legislation). As a global initiative led by a notable multilateral environment agreement (the IWC) with the support of a dedicated Scientific Committee to provide advice and oversight, the CMP program provides a credible and internationally recognised way for governments to collaborate towards robust protection of their cetaceans.

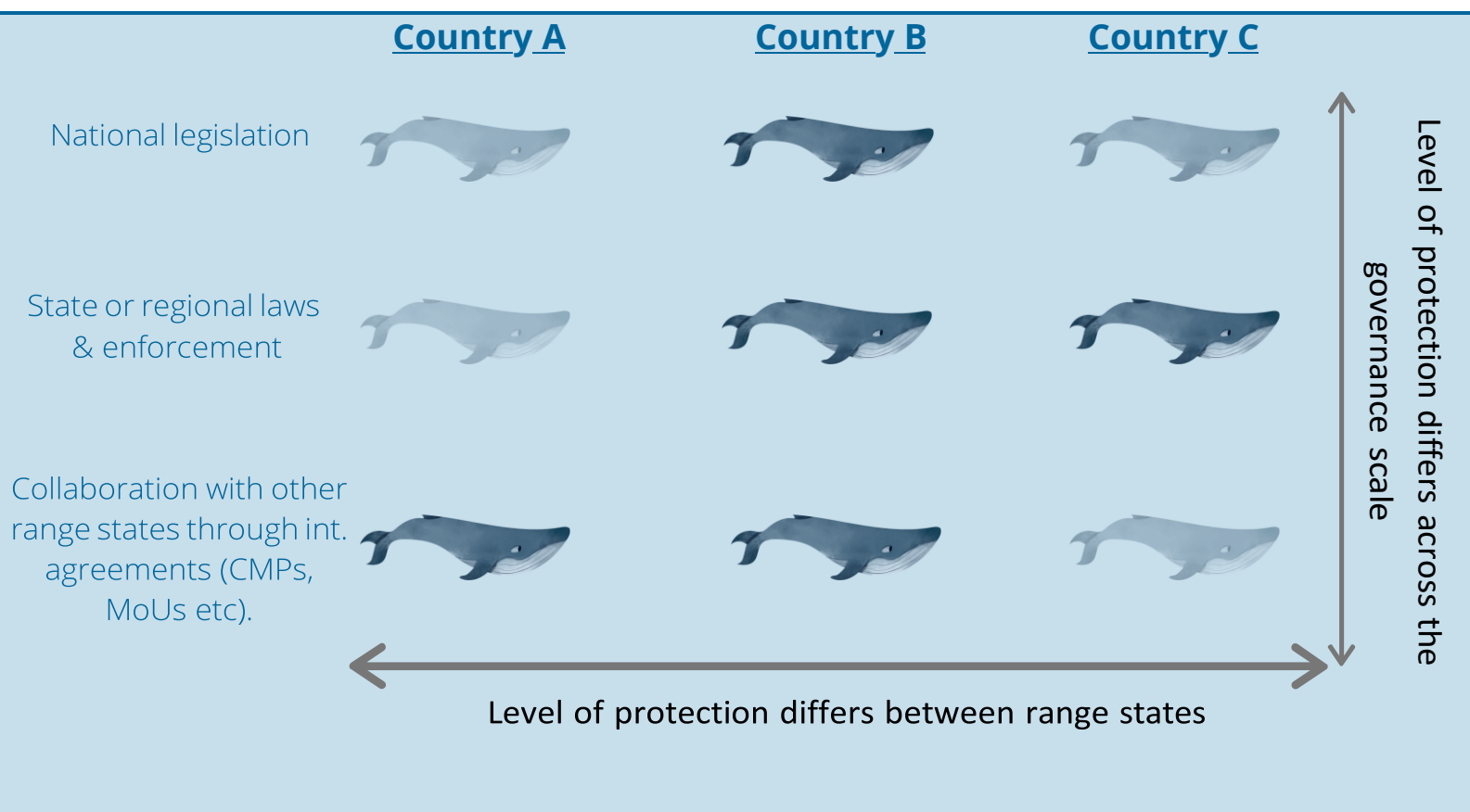


Figure 1: Challenges in the conservation of migratory and transboundary species

CMP PARTNERSHIP AND PRINCIPLES



Figure 2: The stakeholders involved in the development, governance, and implementation of CMPs

While all CMPs are different, the objectives that link CMP stakeholders are consistent. Together CMP stakeholders:

- Collaborate to achieve healthy, well-managed, and recovering populations
- Demonstrate international leadership in collaborative conservation for cetaceans or the mitigation of complex threats.

Through collaboration, the partners can achieve wider impact and influence, and better outcomes for cetaceans.

Involvement in the CMP program adds value to each government, organisation and individual involved.

CMPs are non-binding and voluntary, but participation means a shared commitment to the following principles:

- Sharing knowledge, expertise, and opportunity
- Accountability and trust
- Capacity building
- Innovation
- Effective communication



The signing of the Chile-Peru MoU to coordinate co-operation on the conservation of the eastern South Pacific southern right whale population - a key achievement of the CMP for this population.

GOVERNANCE

There are a number of Commission bodies that support the development and implementation of CMPs.

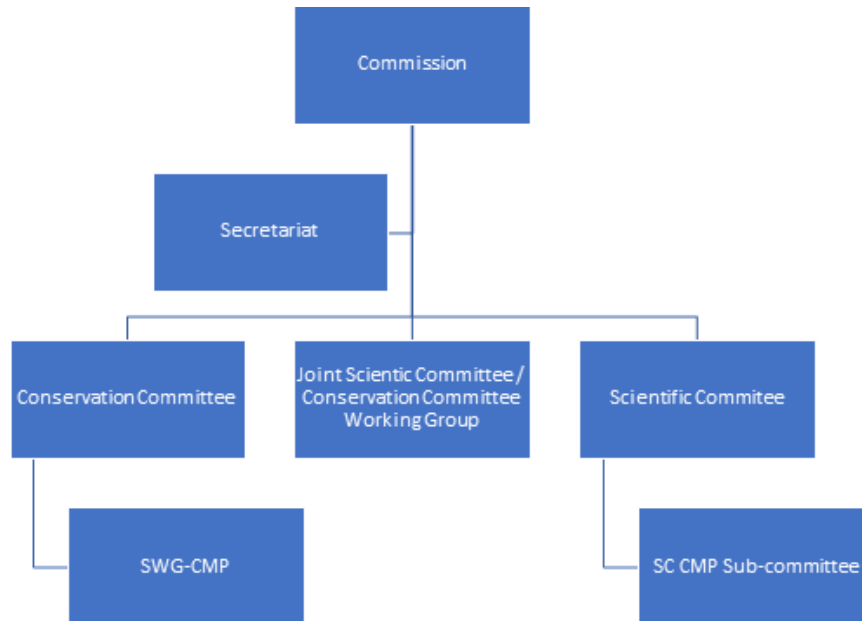


Figure 3: CMP Governance

The Conservation Committee and Scientific Committee oversee the CMP initiative, review draft CMPs, and provide recommendations and advice to the Commission and its subsidiary bodies. Coordination between the Conservation and Scientific Committees is supported by the Joint Scientific Committee/Conservation Committee Working Group.

The Commission's Secretariat provides administrative and program support. Key activities include:

- Supporting the Conservation Committee's Standing Working Group on CMPs (SWG-CMP) in its outreach and promotion of the CMP initiative
- Helping participating range states to cost CMP actions
- Managing financial contracts between the Commission and participating range states.

The SWG-CMP is the primary coordination point for the CMP program. Key activities include:

- Providing support and advice to participating range states and other participating stakeholders on the CMP nomination, development and implementation process, including reviewing CMP nominations and draft CMPs in line with the guidelines
- Maintaining CMP guidelines and templates
- Conducting outreach and promoting the CMP initiative within and outside the Commission to encourage participation and engagement
- Evaluating the progress and implementation of CMPs and the CMP strategic plan, and reporting to the Conservation Committee and the Commission
- Making decisions on the allocation and distribution of funds.

The Scientific Committee's CMP Sub-committee (SC-CMP) considers populations that are the subject of existing CMPs, or are high priority candidates for a CMP, with a focus on progressing scientific work and making recommendations on priority species and populations. Key activities include:

- Providing recommendations to the SWG-CMP on priority populations/species for CMP development
- Reviewing CMP nominations and draft CMPs in line with the CMP guidelines
- Providing scientific advice to participating range states and other participating stakeholders during the development of CMPs
- Assisting participating range states in progressing scientific actions included in their endorsed CMPs.
- Take into account the advice from any relevant Task Team that may be in place.

[The Commission is the final decision-maker in the CMP process.](#)

FUNDING

The CMP program is not a centrally funded initiative. CMP participants receive in-kind support from the Commission in the form of expertise, advice, fundraising and outreach assistance. It is the responsibility of participating range states and other participating stakeholders to fund CMP development and implementation.

The ability and commitment of range states to fund the CMP should be taken into consideration by the Commission and subsidiary bodies when considering whether to endorse a CMP, as availability of funds is a key factor for successful implementation. Drafters must elaborate on funding means when developing a CMP.

The Commission has two streams of limited funding that may be used to assist the development and implementation of CMPs: voluntary contributions received from Contracting Governments for conservation purposes; and the Scientific Committee Research Fund. Where funding for CMP actions is sought from the Commission, a proposal is required, setting out costs, timelines and deliverables, and associated reporting on progress in the delivery of funded actions and their contribution to agreed objectives.

Consideration by the Commission on whether to financially support a CMP, and to what degree, is informed by conservation priority, the cost effectiveness of agreed actions, and funding availability. Further information on CMP funding principles and processes can be found [here](#).



THE CMP PROCESS

To contribute to the International Whaling Commission's work to support the recovery and conservation of cetaceans, the development and consideration of CMPs for endorsement needs to be both rigorous and timely. This is particularly important for populations or threats that require urgent action. CMPs are management tools. They require clear, achievable goals and objectives; practical, prioritised mitigation actions; regular monitoring and reporting; and clear governance structures to coordinate the engagement of key stakeholders.

Plans should be developed and implemented by more than one range state in consultation with relevant stakeholders. Implementation is often led by an expert coordinator who is an experienced marine science and/or conservation management professional.

The process for CMPs involves a number of interrelated stages: nomination or recommendation for priority status, development, endorsement by the Commission, implementation, monitoring and review. These are illustrated in Figure 3.

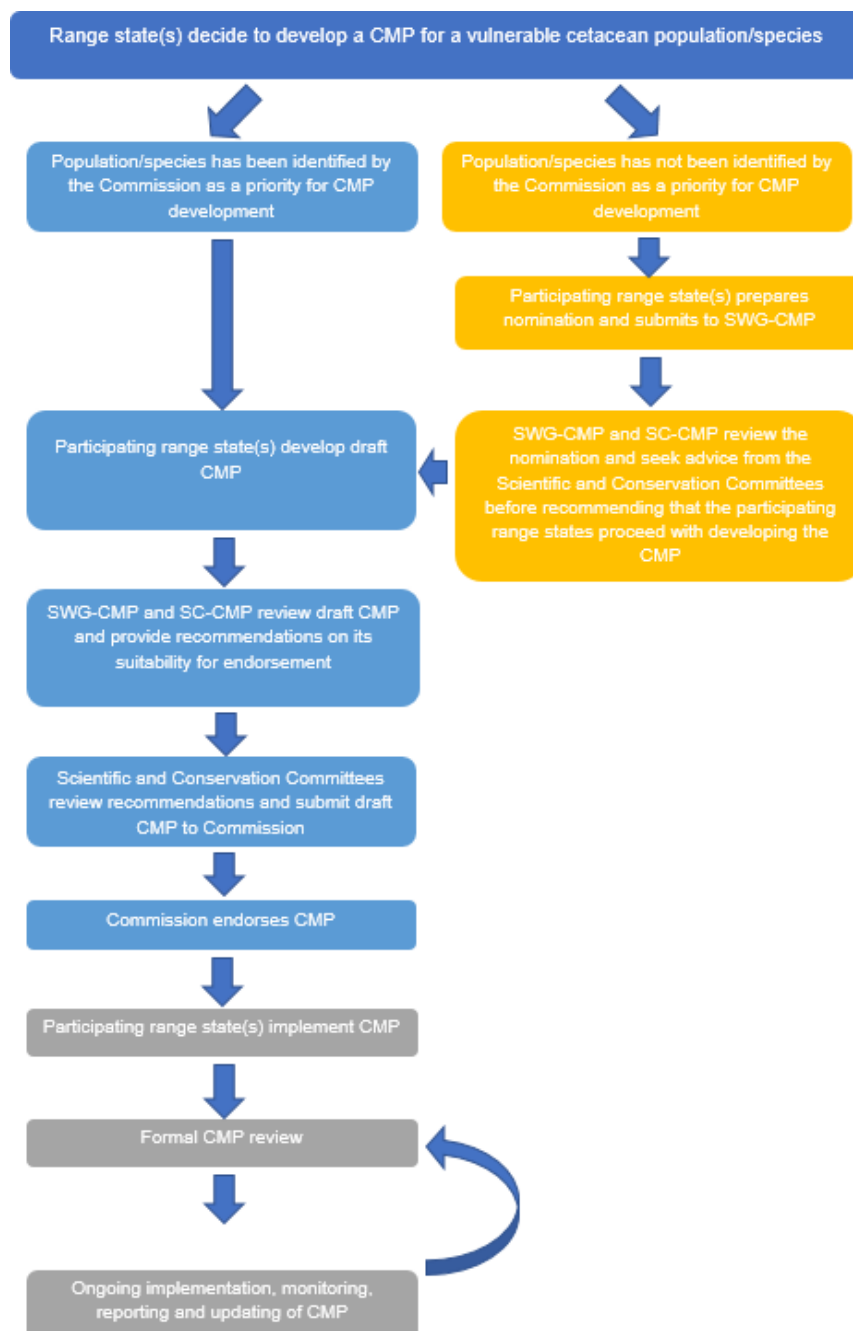


Figure 4: Steps in the CMP process

NOMINATION

The nomination process ensures that investment of time, energy and resources by the Commission is warranted. The underlying science must demonstrate that urgent conservation action is needed for a specific population, and that positive conservation gains are likely to be achieved through the implementation of a CMP.

A nomination is not required if a population/species has already been identified by the Scientific Committee and Conservation Committee as being a high priority for a CMP. After consulting with the Conservation Committee's Standing Working Group on CMPs (SWG-CMP), CMP proponents may commence development of the CMP at any time.

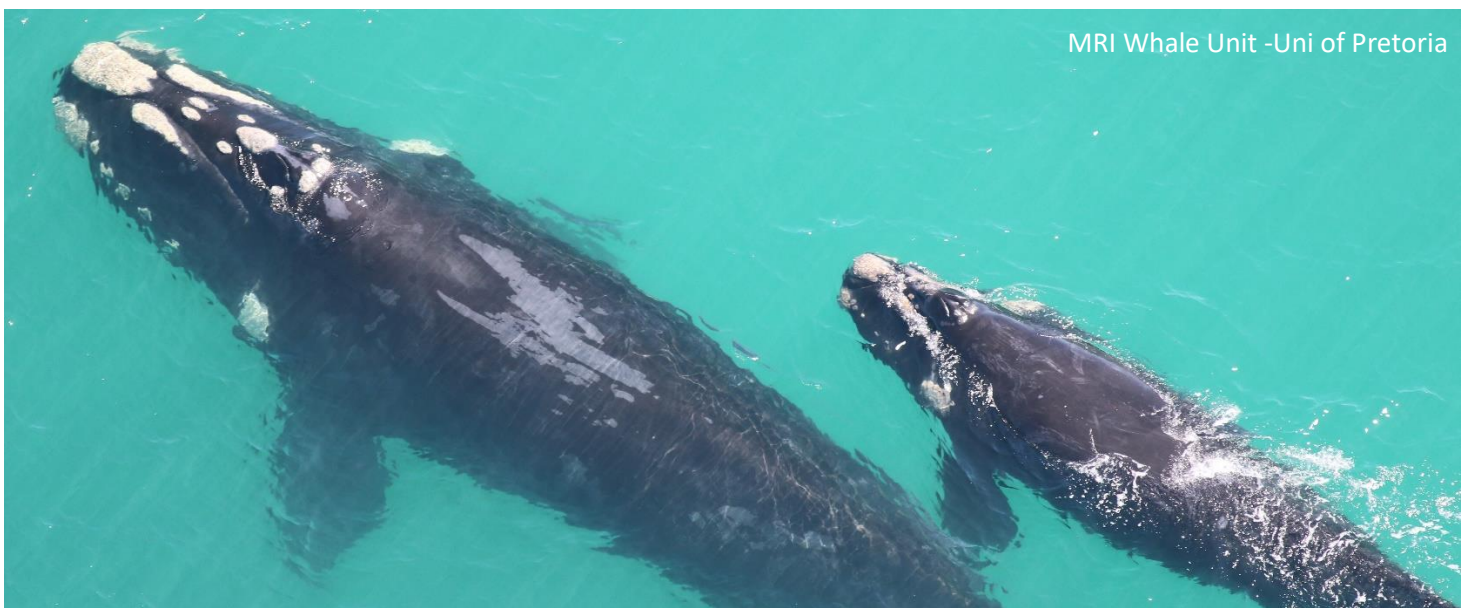
Who can make a nomination?

Nominations can be made by Commission member states (or groups of states) or by the Commission itself, through its Scientific or Conservation Committees.

The following issues should be considered in the nomination:

- A summary of the underlying science supporting the need for the plan to address threats to a population/s and/or to a critical habitat.
- Overall objectives and anticipated short, medium and long term outcomes for anticipated recovery or conservation benefits, and their relationship to the aims and objectives of the Commission.
- Potential mitigation measures, including any critically urgent measures that may need to be pursued in parallel to development of a full plan.
- Agreed and anticipated partners (both within and outside the Commission) in the development and implementation of the planned CMP.
- Anticipated timeframes for the development of the plan.

If the nominating state(s) intends to seek resources from or through the Commission for the development of the CMP, the nomination should include both a **budget** and an outline of the proposed **governance arrangements**.



MRI Whale Unit -Uni of Pretoria

CMP nominations are submitted to the SWG-CMP. The SWG-CMP also plays an important coordinating and supporting role during the nomination process. Commission member states planning to nominate should discuss their proposal with the SWG-CMP. This will allow early testing of ideas and issues and for informal engagement with other committees, sub-committees and working groups.



SWG-CMP submits the nomination to the Scientific Committee. The Scientific Committee will examine the feasibility of the CMP by considering all technical matters pertaining to the nomination.



SWG-CMP submits the nomination and Scientific Committee's advice to the Conservation Committee. The Conservation Committee considers the nomination with respect to management and conservation policy matters, alongside with the Scientific Committee's advice.



Conservation Committee recommends, via the SWG-CMP, whether development of the CMP can proceed.

Key issues considered by the Committees

Scientific Committee	Conservation Committee
Is the proposed CMP the most efficient management tool for the conservation needs of the nominated population(s)?	
Are the short, medium and long-term goals clearly defined?	
Have the objectives, to the extent feasible, been quantified?	
Have the objectives been prioritised?	
Is the underpinning scientific rationale supporting the nomination reasonable?	Are the identified goals and actions consistent with Commission policies, programs and initiatives; and with any other relevant multi-lateral environmental agreements, or regional natural resource management arrangements?
Have threats been evaluated on the basis of a scientific assessment? If not, what is the evidence?	
Is scientific uncertainty appropriately reflected and taken into account in the goals, action and anticipated outcomes?	Are research, data collection and capacity building activities clearly linked to subsequent on-ground actions and measurable conservation outcomes?
Is the relationship between the threats and the impacts on the nominated population or habitat established? If yes, has it been quantified?	Will proposed governance arrangements support effective delivery, coordination and reporting of actions?
Do the identified actions directly address the threats or its symptoms?	
Is the CMP likely to provide positive conservation outcomes for the nominated population or habitat?	Does the nomination include the required partners for effective conservation actions?
Could the likelihood of success of alternative management actions be evaluated by simulation?	

DEVELOPMENT

Once the SWG-CMP has recommended that a CMP be developed, the proponents should commence developing it at the earliest opportunity.

The SWG-CMP can provide advice and support during the development of the CMP including by facilitating the provision of data and expert advice from relevant Commission bodies, providing contacts and facilitating mentoring from those who have first-hand experience developing and implementing a CMP, and arranging assistance from the Secretariat to properly cost the actions outlined in the CMP.

CMP-specific working groups can also be established within the Conservation Committee and Scientific Committee to support range states during the development of their plan.

While the focus of a CMP will vary depending on its key objectives (for example, recovery of a critical population, mitigation of key threats to one or more populations, or recovery of critical habitats), there are components that all plans should address:

Topic	Information sets/components
Population(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Biology, status and environmental parameters of target cetacean populations• Critical habitats and corresponding parameters• Abundance and trend data (including modelling framework)• 'Attributes' of the population(s) to be monitored
Threats and mitigation measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Known and potential threats (direct and indirect)• Threat prioritisation• Mitigation measures• Evaluation and prioritisation of mitigation measures
Goals, objectives and actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Short, medium and long term objectives• Agreed actions to address threats including monitoring of compliance with those actions• Agreed actions to monitor the population or habitat attributes• Alignment of actions to the CMP's objectives
Regulatory framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Legislative and management arrangements in range states• Compliance and enforcement measures in range states• International conventions and/or agreements relevant to the CMP objectives• Commission objectives, requirements and processes
Stakeholder engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Key stakeholders• Engagement processes• Educational activities• Capacity building• Public awareness raising
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Coordinator and steering committee• Outline of roles and responsibilities• Monitoring arrangements and requirements (threats and actions)• Reporting requirements

- Review timelines
- Revision/adjustment process
- Raise necessary funds to implement priority actions

Cooperation between participating jurisdictions is of paramount importance to the success of the CMP in achieving its objectives. While enforcement measures are a matter for participating jurisdictions, participating range states may wish to outline in their plans any enforcement measures they propose to adopt in the effective implementation of the plan.

Goals and objectives

The material used to address each core component will vary depending on the issue. However, as CMPs are management tools, appropriate attention must be given to the clear articulation of goals (short, medium and/or long-term) against which progress milestones can be effectively measured and reported. Actions in the CMP need to be clearly aligned with goals and objectives, and a monitoring program should be incorporated as an integral part of the CMP.

Actions

These form the key component of any CMP and can fall into the following categories:

Coordination	Public awareness and capacity building	Monitoring
Research essential for providing adequate management advice or filling knowledge gaps		Mitigation measures

It is important that actions are realistic and effective. They should be specific and include the following information, where relevant:

- ❖ Description (concise objective, clear link to the threat it is trying to address, rationale, target data or activity, method, and implementation timeline)
- ❖ Actors (those responsible for implementation and other relevant stakeholders)
- ❖ Evaluation (process and actors responsible)
- ❖ Priority (importance to the plan and feasibility)
- ❖ Costs (where appropriate)

Governance

In the event that a coordinator (and supporting steering committee) has not yet been appointed, appointing a coordinator should be considered as a high priority. A coordinator is considered a crucial role for the successful implementation of a CMP. Responsibilities generally include the coordination of the Steering Committee, stakeholder management and communication, advancement of priority actions, IWC reporting, and funding management, among others.

Stakeholder engagement

Serious consideration should be given early in the development process to the involvement of stakeholders, including the timing and nature of engagement opportunities. These may include other Commission range states, non-member range states, non-government organisations, scientists, industries, communities and civil society more generally.

The ultimate success of a CMP will depend on its effective adoption and implementation by stakeholders. Early and continued engagement is beneficial.

Submission and review

Once completed, the draft CMP should be submitted to the SWG-CMP which will request a formal review of the plan from the Scientific Committee’s CMP Sub-committee.

The draft CMP and the advice and recommendations of the SWG-CMP and the Scientific Committee’s CMP Sub-committee will then be put to the Conservation Committee and Scientific Committee for review.

Key issues for consideration in the review of a draft CMP

Scientific Committee’s CMP Sub-committee	SWG-CMP
Are the short, medium and long-term goals clearly defined? Will the proposed actions measurably deliver on the stated goals and objectives? Are the proposed actions the most appropriate response measure? Have proposed actions been appropriately prioritised? Have any key actions been omitted? Have the governance and budget implications for proposed actions and mitigation measures been considered? Are the proposed actions achievable within the lifespan of the plan?	
Is the underpinning scientific rationale supporting the plan reasonable? Does it provide the necessary scientific justification for implementation of the plan?	Where actions relate to activities addressed by other multilateral environmental agreements and regional arrangements, will the actions further advance progress beyond these existing arrangements?
Is the relationship between the threats and the impacts on the population or habitat established? Have those relationships been quantified and if so, have they been shown to be statistically significant?	Are research, data collection and capacity building activities clearly linked to subsequent on-ground actions and measurable conservation outcomes?
Do the identified actions address the threats or its symptoms? Has the impact of alternative actions been evaluated by simulation?	Will proposed governance arrangements support effective delivery, coordination and reporting of actions?
Has the effectiveness of the scientific monitoring program for the plan been considered?	How effectively does the scientific data underpin management decisions?

Once reviewed, the draft CMP and the Committees’ recommendations will be put to the Commission for consideration and endorsement.

Will the proposed scientific monitoring program be used to assess the effectiveness of the plan?

Is scientific uncertainty appropriately reflected and taken into account in the goal, actions and anticipated outcomes?

Is the CMP consistent with the principles of adaptive management?

How often will CMP performance reviews take place?

IMPLEMENTATION

Regular monitoring, reporting, review and revision of CMPs is critical to ensure they continue to effectively support conservation efforts for the relevant population/species.

Regular progress reporting to the SWG-CMP also assists the Commission in its promotion of the CMP initiative. Promotion of the benefits of each CMP may help to increase engagement and buy-in from relevant stakeholders and may assist participating range states to leverage funding to progress CMP actions.

Implementation

The implementation of endorsed CMPs is at the discretion of participating range states and relevant stakeholders, and is usually supported by a CMP coordinator, Steering Committee and implementation strategy.

An implementation strategy can be helpful where a high degree of coordination is required in the delivery of agreed actions, or where actions have significant associated costs and where resources may be sought from parties outside participating range states.

Monitoring and reporting

The establishment of appropriate monitoring and compliance regimes will play an important role in securing endorsement by the Commission. The coordinator and Steering Committee should provide regular updates to the Scientific and Conservation Committee on the implementation strategies and future needs of the CMPs.

Review – adaptive management

Adaptive management requires periodic review (e.g. every two years) and adjustment of the CMP and its recommended actions based on both improvements in scientific understanding and management practices, and from changes conditions arising from the implementation of actions and the attainment of objectives over time.

Scheduling reviews of the success of the CMP will play an important role in securing endorsement by the Commission.



Camila Domit



THE STRATEGIC PLAN 2024-2032

OVERVIEW

The strategic plan aims to establish a forward direction of travel for the IWC CMP program, rather than set targets, to ensure the program remains a modern, best-practice, and world leading example of collaborative conservation. This will help to ensure the stability and longevity of the program, setting it up to maintain relevance and effectiveness despite the global challenge in maintaining momentum and funding for conservation actions. The three strategic objectives are designed to be achievable, and will be regularly reviewed by the Commission to ensure they remain relevant and on track, or replaced/refined as needed.

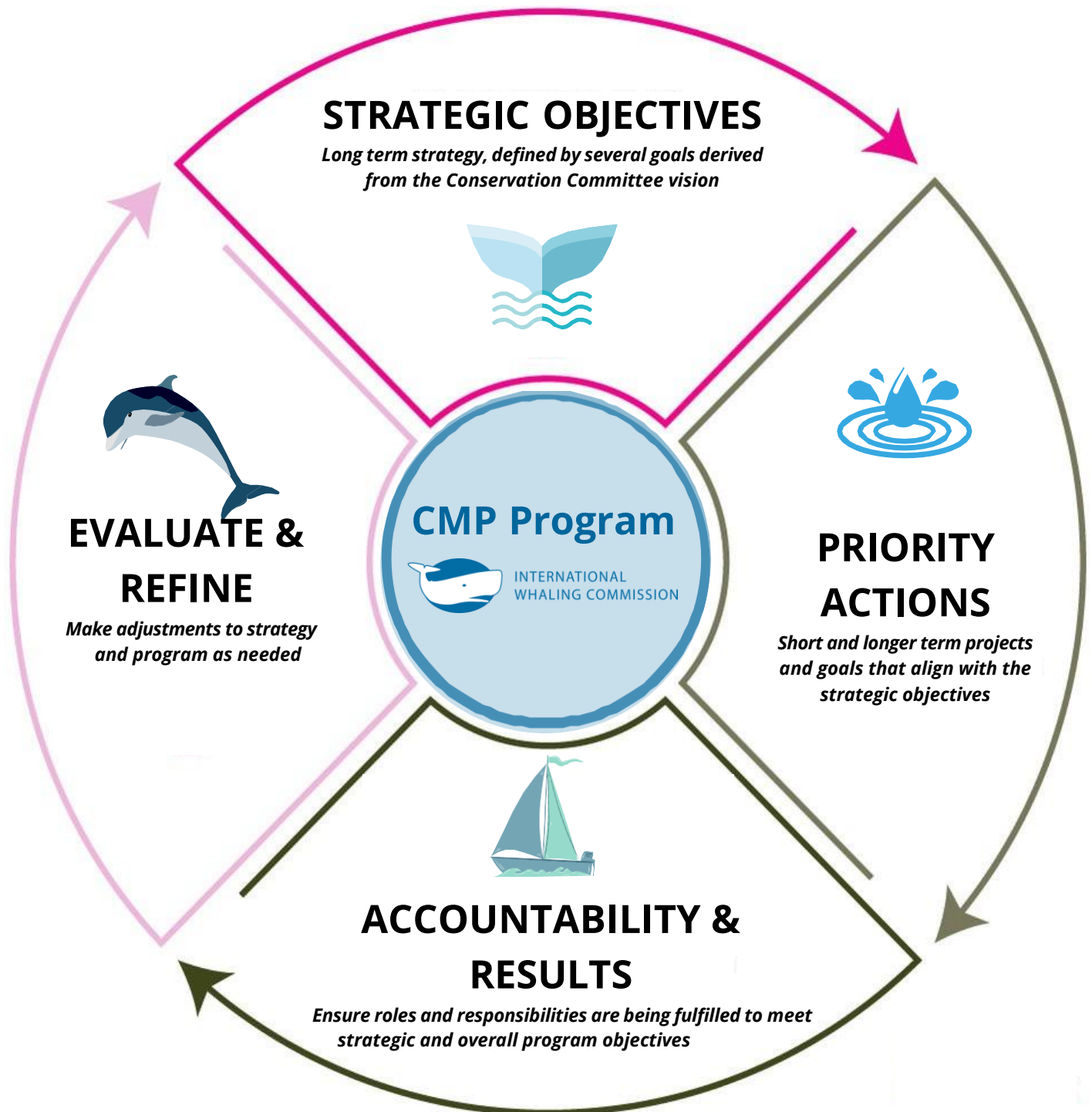


Figure 5: The cycle for strategic management and implementation of the CMP program

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The following three primary objectives and their related actions are key components of the Strategic Plan. The objectives will be implemented using the CMP Action Plan.

OBJECTIVE ONE: IMPROVE FINANCIAL SELF-SUFFICIENCY OF CMPS AND RECOGNITION OF THE CMP PROGRAM

- Embed fundraising activities into current and future CMPS
- Create fundraising tools and identify fundraising opportunities
- Use communications tools to increase the international visibility of the CMP program, including with industry stakeholders.
- Improve collaboration with other international organisations and multilateral environment agreements.

OBJECTIVE TWO: STRENGTHEN CMP PARTNERSHIPS TO ACHIEVE RESULTS

- Improve communication, cooperation and collaboration between CMP partners
- Improve management of the CMP program
- Improve government interest/engagement/support for CMPS
- Improve outreach to stakeholders for priority populations
- Improve linkages and communication with other IWC working groups

OBJECTIVE THREE: IMPROVE MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF THE CMP PROGRAM AND CONSERVATION EFFECT

- Investigate ways for range states/CMP Co-ordinators to capture and record data relevant to the CMP Program (i.e. using the IWC Conservation Database (in development))
- Improve and streamline regular reporting on CMP actions and progress
- Invest in the development and maintenance of resources, templates and reporting tools that support the program

