



International Whaling Commission

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CIRCULAR COMMUNICATION TO MEMBERS OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE
AND INVITED PARTICIPANTS
IWC.SC.88

Outcome and follow-up to the Annual Commission Meeting in Berlin

Doug DeMaster has requested that the attached information be circulated to the Scientific Committee.

Dr. Nicky Grandy
Secretary to the Commission

Outcome and Follow-up to IWC/55

DOUG DEMASTER, CHAIR OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE PRIORITIES, STRUCTURE AND BUDGET

Scientific Committee Report

Many of you may not have seen Items 19-25 and Annex S of our report (IWC/55/Rep 1). These items describe Committee priorities and initial agenda for the 2004 meeting, data processing and computing needs for 2003/2004, and funding requirements for 2003/2004 respectively. The complete Report and Annexes are now on the IWC website: http://www.iwcoffice.org/SCWEB/sc_2003.htm. Annex U gives e-mail correspondence groups and their terms of reference. Please check it to make sure that your name is included under those Working Groups you wished to participate in - if you wish to join any of the Working Groups, please contact Clare Last directly (clast@iwcoffice.org). Remember, if your e-mail address has changed, please let Clare know.

The Secretariat has also pulled out all of the tasks identified in the Committee's report and who should complete them. Find out if you have been allocated something by clicking onto:

<http://www.iwcoffice.org/SCWEB/SCAction.htm>.

Next year's meeting dates

The 2004 SC meeting (SC56) will be in Sorrento, Italy. As was the case last year, the Committee meeting will last only 12 days and is tentatively scheduled to take place from Tuesday, 29 June through Saturday, 10 July. There will be a 2-day Southern Ocean Sanctuary (SOS)10-Year Review meeting before the main meeting that may continue during the week of the sub-committees. The SOS review will take place on 27-28 June and details will be provided later. The Commission meeting will take place between 19-22 July. The Commission's sub-groups will meet between 13 July and 17 July.

Initial agenda and sub-committees

As you will see from our approved work plan (see below and the IWC/55/Rep 1, Item 19), the sub-committee and working group structure is similar to the structure used in Berlin, except that the EEZ working group will be replaced by a working group responsible for developing recommendations regarding the In-depth Assessment (IA) of North Pacific minke whales (NPM). Whether the NPM working group is convened will depend on a determination by the Chair regarding the adequacy of the data needed for an IA. The Chair and Head of Science will communicate intersessionally with the chair of the NPM intersessional working group regarding this decision. As was the case last year, with only 6 days for sub-committees and 14 sub-committees (and working groups) that need to meet, the Convenors and Chair have agreed a tentative number of sessions per sub-committee, where the total number of planned sessions (91) is approximately equal to the total number of sessions available (90).

RMP	10	SD	7
AWMP	10	SH	6
BRG	8	Sanctuaries*	3
IA	11	Scientific Permits	3
BC	4	DNA	2
E	8	NP minke assessment	5
WW	6		
SM	8	TOTAL SESSIONS	91

*in addition to a 2 day pre-Committee meeting

The following priority topics were agreed by the Convenors for the 56th meeting of the Committee. The Commission approved the entire work plan with no changes.

RMP

As last year, this sub-committee will concentrate on general issues as well as preparations for Implementation. The priority topics will be:

- (1) review progress on adjusting convergence criteria for the CATCHLIMIT program;
- (2) review the *Implementation* process in the light of the experience with western North Pacific common minke whales;
- (3) review the level of information required for *pre-implementation assessments* and for proceeding to an *Implementation*;
- (4) work towards implementing the RMP for western North Pacific Bryde's whale.
- (5) comment on whether there is sufficient information on North Atlantic fin whales to begin a *pre-implementation assessment*.

AWMP

The Standing Working Group will hold an intersessional workshop to finalise robustness trials for the eastern North Pacific gray whale and consider results from *Evaluation Trials*. At the Annual Meeting it will:

- (1) work towards recommending a gray whale *SLA*;
- (2) review of results from the Greenlandic Research Programme and make recommendations;
- (3) review progress on development of potential *SLA* for Greenland fisheries;
- (4) undertake annual review of catch data and management advice for minke and fin whales off Greenland;
- (5) undertake annual review of catch data and management advice for humpback whales off St Vincent and The Grenadines.

Bowhead, right and gray whales (BRG)

At the Annual meeting this sub-committee will:

- (1) complete in-depth assessment of BCB bowhead whales;
- (2) undertake annual review of catch data and management advice for ENP gray whale;
- (3) undertake annual review of catch data and management advice for BCB bowhead whale;
- (4) if there is time, it will: review new information on small stocks of bowhead, right, and gray whales.

In-depth Assessment (IA)

This sub-committee will establish an *ad hoc* working group during next year's meeting to undertake an In-depth Assessment of western North Pacific common minke whales providing the intersessional steering group determines sufficient progress has been made. In addition, it will:

- (1) consider issues related to the abundance estimation of Antarctic minke whales;
- (2) consider options for future SOWER cruises.

Bycatches and other anthropogenic removals (BC)

This sub-committee will:

- (1) further review methods to estimate bycatch based on fisheries data and observer programmes;
- (2) further review methods to estimate bycatch based on genetic data, particularly with respect to the proposed workshop;
- (3) review information and methods on estimates of cetacean mortality caused by vessel strikes;
- (4) review information and methods on estimates of cetacean mortality caused by other human activities.

Environmental concerns (E)

Suggested priority topics for E will be developed intersessionally by a working group led by Gales. The working group will consider input from the Chair following the Commission meetings, as well as input from convenors. The primary objective of this exercise will be to better integrate the mission of the Standing Working Group on Environmental concerns with the priority topics of the other sub-committees. The final decision will be taken by the Chair in consultation with the new convenor.

Whalewatching (WW)

The Standing Working Group will:

- (1) review report from intersessional workshop on Whalewatching in South Africa – although this is not being convened by the Committee, it will nonetheless provide an opportunity for furthering the objectives of this standing working group;
- (2) consider further development of DRS;
- (3) continue review of whalewatching guidelines and regulations.

If there is time, it will:

- (4) review risk to cetaceans of high speed whalewatching boats;
- (5) review potential impacts of “swim-with” programs on populations of cetaceans.

Small cetaceans (SM)

This Standing sub-committee will:

- (1) review of status of franciscana;
- (2) plan and convene a one day workshop on depredation of fisheries by small cetaceans in the Mediterranean region – if possible, this workshop will be held the day prior to the start of the Committee meeting;
- (3) review progress on previous recommendations;
- (4) review incidental catches and takes of small cetaceans by country.

Stock definition (SD)

This Working Group will:

- (1) review progress on the TOSSM project;
- (2) continue review of statistical and genetic issues related to population structure and unit to conserve;
- (3) consider application of non-genetic data to stock identification.

Southern Hemisphere whales other than Antarctic minke whales (SH)

This sub-committee will:

- (1) complete in-depth assessment of Southern Hemisphere humpback whales;
- (2) investigate data from illegal Soviet catches;
- (3) investigate use of abundance estimates from SOWER and JARPA in population dynamics models.

Sanctuaries (S)

A pre-meeting workshop will be convened to prepare recommendations regarding the review of the Southern Ocean Sanctuary. This Working Group will:

- (1) complete review of SOS;

If there is time it will also:

- (2) review process to facilitate review of future proposals and future sanctuary reviews.

Scientific Permits (P)

This Standing Working Group will:

- (1) review proposals to facilitate the review process of the Committee;
- (2) review research results from existing permits;
- (3) review plans for new and continuing permit proposals.

DNA

This Working Group will:

- (1) review genetic methods for species, stock, and individual identification;
- (2) collect and archive tissue samples from catches and bycatch;
- (3) reference databases and standards for diagnostic DNA registries.

BUDGET

Table 4 under Item 21 gives the reduced budget of £242,600 agreed by the Committee in plenary discussions. Fortunately for the Committee, the Commission adopted this budget. We owe special thanks to Martin Harvey and Sean Moran for their help in supporting our request.

COMMISSION DECISIONS

The Commission made no specific requests to the Scientific Committee for analyses during their meeting.

In the remainder of this note, other Commission decisions relevant to our work are outlined. The press release on the IWC website (<http://www.iwcoffice.org/FinalPressRelease2003.htm>) provides further details on the Commission meeting.

Sanctuaries

As last year, neither the South Atlantic nor the South Pacific Sanctuary was adopted.

RMS

Little direct progress was made on the Revised Management Scheme (RMS), but the Commission did have a private Commissioners'/Alternate Commissioners' meeting to attempt to resolve disagreements on a number of broad issues, including specification of an inspection and observer system and specification for a catch verification program. Further work will be undertaken intersessionally by a group of Commissioner's under the new Chair (Henrik Fischer) to explore ways to take the RMS process forwards.

Catch limits for commercial whaling

The Commission did not adopt a proposal by Japan for catch limits of 150 minke whales and 150 Bryde's whales to be taken by coastal community-based whaling.

Aboriginal subsistence whaling

Last year, the Commission adopted the *Bowhead SLA* for providing advice on strike limits for the BCB stock of bowhead whale. Work continues regarding the adoption of an Aboriginal Whaling Scheme. The Commission welcomed a report from the Scientific Committee that progress had been made towards the development of an *SLA* for the eastern North Pacific stock of gray whale. The issue of why there were fundamental differences in catch advice based on the RMS and the *SLA* for bowhead whales was again raised. My response to the Commission was taken directly from the text of our IWC/55/Rep 1 (page 11). Hopefully, there will be no need to include this item on next year's agenda.

All of the present catch limits approved at last year's Commission meeting and supported by the Scientific Committee at this year's meeting were retained by the Commission.

Scientific Permits

The Commission passed a resolution urging countries to terminate or not to commence special permit catches. It also passed a resolution asking Japan not to continue its special permit catches of Antarctic minke whales. The Commission further recommended that no additional JARPA programs be undertaken until the Scientific Committee has completed an in-depth review of the results of the sixteen years of JARPA and its review of the abundance estimates for Southern Hemisphere minke whales.

Conservation Committee

The Commission passed a resolution (called the Berlin Initiative) agreeing to establish a Conservation Committee, composed of all contracting parties. It is intended to have the same status as, for example, the Scientific Committee and the Finance and Administration Committee. Any actions necessary to change the Commission's Rules of Procedure are anticipated to take place prior to or during next year's meeting of the Commission. According to the Resolution, its functions are: (1) the preparation and recommendation to the Commission of its future Conservation Agenda; (2) the implementation of those items in the Agenda that the Commission may refer to it; and (3) making recommendations to the Commission in order to maintain and update the Conservation Agenda on a continuing basis.

In addition, the Conservation Committee will explore how the Commission can coordinate its conservation agenda through greater collaboration with a wider range of other organizations. Finally, the Commission requests the Scientific Committee to advise the Conservation Committee in the performance of the tasks entrusted to it and to ensure that the appropriate scientific research items, including inter alia, whalewatching, environmental issues, and behavioural research, are incorporated in the conservation agenda of the Commission.

The details of the relationship between the Scientific Committee and the Conservation Committee are not immediately clear and a specific item on the Conservation Committee may not need to be put on our agenda next year. The Conservation Committee will have its first meeting next year (for 1.5 days) when it is anticipated that the details of its operation (including its relationship to us) will be finalised.

OTHER

Finally, at our meeting next year we will have to revisit the issue of how we elect officers. Our suggested changes from SC/54 to our Rules of Procedure regarding appointment of a new SC Chair and Vice-Chair (Annex Q of IWC/54/4, the SC report) have not yet been adopted by the Commission. In discussion last year, some Commissioners were concerned that we had agreed to only report the name of the elected candidate, not the vote count. This issue was referred back to the Committee for further consideration since the need for an election was unlikely to arise during our next two meetings. We did not schedule this as an agenda item in Berlin because of a lack of time and urgency. Therefore, the Commission did not consider this issue further during their meeting. It is my view that our agreement not to provide the actual vote counts was correct. However, during SC/56 we will include an agenda item for further discussion and to develop a recommendation to the Commission for our Rules of Procedure.