

NJG/JAC/30805

10 October 2008

CIRCULAR COMMUNICATION TO MEMBERS OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE
IWC.SC.138

Outcome and follow-up to IWC/60 in Santiago, Chile

Arne Bjørge, Chair of the Scientific Committee, 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/60

ARNE BJØRGE, CHAIR OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE PRIORITIES, STRUCTURE AND BUDGET

Scientific Committee Report

The complete Report and Annexes are now on the IWC website:

http://www.iwcoffice.org/sci_com/screport.htm

Items 20-22 of our report (IWC/60/Rep 1, pp 72-78) describe Committee priorities and initial agenda for the 2009 meeting, data processing and computing needs for 2008/09, and funding requirements for 2008/2009 respectively. [Annex Q](#) 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 Jemma Miller directly (jemma.miller@iwcoffice.org). Remember, if your e-mail address changes, please let the Secretariat know. Convenors of all groups have been notified of their members and the e-mail addresses you used when you registered.

The Secretariat has pulled out all of the tasks identified in the Committee's report and who should complete them. This has been placed on the Scientific Committee website:

http://www.iwcoffice.org/sci_com/sctasks.htm

Next year's meeting dates

The 2009 Annual Meeting of the Committee (SC/61) will be in Madeira, Portugal. The Scientific Committee meeting will last 13 days and will take place from Sunday 31st May to Fri 12th June. There will be two pre-meeting meetings (29-30 May) on issues related to AWMP and RMP. Depending on progress made intersessionally the pre-meeting of AWMP will be a joint meeting with BRG on issues related to gray whales. These pre-meetings are scheduled to facilitate the completion of RMP and AWMP agendas and any subject on their agendas may be discussed.

Initial agenda and sub-committees

At this year's Scientific Committee meeting, 13 sub-committees (including Standing Working Groups and *ad hoc* Working Groups) were established. Seven days were available for sub-committees, and 84 sessions for sub-committees was scheduled based on three concurrent sub-committee meetings for each of four work sessions per day, starting at approximately 08:30 and ending typically at 18:00. However, because of the inability to schedule certain sub-committees opposite others, we only reached 81 regular sessions. The time after 18:00 was used for small *ad hoc* working groups, report drafting and simulation runs. Evening sessions were also available for sub-committees that were unable to complete their agenda during day sessions. The Committee felt this working schedule was preferable compared to previous years' schedule with evening sessions after the dinner break, and agreed to continue this schedule for SC/61.

As you will see from our approved work plan (see below and the IWC/60/Rep 1, Item 20, pp 72-74), the sub-committee and working group structure next year is similar to the structure used in Santiago. In addition, the Special Permit (SP) working group will meet during two evening sessions early in the sub-committee week to complete its agenda. The Sanctuaries working group (SAN) will only be established if there is a new formal proposal for sanctuaries submitted according to the guidelines for review by the Committee. A new aspect next year is that we will use one evening session to 'communicate' a key theme of the Committees work. The *Implementation Review* process as applied to fin whales is a candidate theme.

The sub-committees and the respective Convenors are given in the table below.

Sub-Committee/WG	Convenor	Sub-Committee/WG	Convenor
RMP	Bannister	SM	Rogan
AWMP	Donovan	SD	Bravington
BRG	Walløe	SH	Zerbini
IA	Palka	SP	Bjørge
BC	Perrin	DNA	Pastene
E	Moore	IA-NPM	Kitakado
WW	Kato	EM	Gales

Committee priorities for 2009

As in recent years and with the Committee's agreement, the Convenors met after the close of the Committee meeting and drew up the following as a basis for an initial agenda for the 2009 meeting. The same criteria as in previous years were taken into account (e.g. IWC, 2004b, p. 51). The Committee recognised that these priorities may have to be reviewed in light of decisions made by the Commission and the priorities below have been modified slightly to take into account Commission discussions.

With the current workload for sub-committees, items of lower priority on sub-committee agendas will only be discussed if time allows. When discussing its priorities, the Committee again stressed that papers considering anything other than priority topics will probably not be addressed at next year's meeting, and agreed that this information should be included on the website when the information about document submission is published next year.

There again will be an *ad hoc* Working Group established to consider North Pacific common minke whales and an *ad hoc* Working Group to handle discussions related to ecosystem modelling issues. In addition, the Committee proposed that AWMP and RMP share two days for pre-meetings. The Committee stressed that these pre-meetings are part of the main sub-committee or SWG agendas: discussion will not be re-opened during the main sub-committee week and the agenda items to be discussed may vary from those expected depending on progress.

Revised Management Procedure (RMP)

The following issues are high priority topics:

- (1) review MSY rates;
- (2) dependent upon results of (1), finalise the approach for evaluating proposed modifications to the *CLA*;
- (3) complete implementation for the western North Pacific Bryde's whales;
- (4) complete *Implementation* for North Atlantic fin whales; and
- (5) complete *Implementation Review* for North Atlantic minke whales.

Aboriginal Whaling Management Procedure (AWMP)

The following issues are high priority topics:

- (1) complete work on sex ratio methods for common minke whales off West Greenland;
- (2) conduct *Implementation Review* of eastern North Pacific gray whales;
- (3) carry out annual review of aboriginal catch limits for Greenland and St. Vincent and the Grenadines fisheries;
- (4) continue work on developing *SLAs* for the Greenland fisheries; and
- (5) consider lessons learned from the bowhead whale *Implementation Review*.

Bycatch and other anthropogenic removals (BC)

The following issues are high priority topics:

- (1) collaboration with FAO on collation of relevant fisheries data;
- (2) progress on joining the Fishery Resource Monitoring System (FIRMS);
- (3) estimation of bycatch mortality of large whales;
- (4) estimation of risk and rates of entanglement;
- (5) review progress in including information in national Progress Reports;
- (6) review methods to estimate mortality from ship strikes, including modelling risk; and
- (7) continue to develop global database of ship strike incidents;

The following will be discussed only if there is time and documentation available:

- (8) continue to consider methods for assessing mortality from acoustic sources and marine debris.

Bowhead, right and gray whales (BRG)

The following issues are high priority topics:

- (1) assess stock structure and abundance of the Eastern Canada and West Greenland bowhead whales;
- (2) provide information to the SWG on the AWMP for the *Implementation Review* of Eastern North Pacific gray whales;
- (3) perform annual review of catch information and new scientific information for B-C-B Seas bowhead and Eastern North Pacific gray whales;
- (4) review new information on western North Pacific gray whales including the report of the IUCN rangewide workshop;
- (5) review the report of the intersessional Steering Group on the assessment of southern right whales; and
- (6) review new information on all stocks of right whales and the small stocks of bowhead whales;

Environmental concerns (E)

The following issues are high priority topics:

- (1) review report of the Second Climate Change Workshop;
- (2) review report of the POLLUTION+ Phase II Planning Workshop;
- (3) receive the State of the Cetacean Environment Report (SOCER); and
- (4) review report from the intersessional group on Cetacean Emerging and Resurging Disease (CERD), including skin disease.

The following will be discussed only if there is time and documentation available:

- (5) review any new information on anthropogenic noise and marine energy production.

Ecosystem modelling (EM)

The following issues are high priority topics:

- (1) review report from the joint CCAMLR/IWC Workshop; and
- (2) review models from JARPN II.

In-depth assessment (IA)

The following issues are high priority topics:

- (1) produce agreed abundance estimates of Antarctic minke whales from IDCR/SOWER data (highest);
- (2) conduct an analysis of ageing errors that could be used in catch-at-age analyses of Antarctic minke whales;
- (3) continue development of the catch-at-age models of the Antarctic minke whales;
- (4) continue to examine the differences between minke abundance estimates from CPII and CPIII (these may be Area-specific differences), particularly the impact of sea ice conditions on the abundance estimates; and
- (5) develop recommendations for future SOWER cruises, both for the short- and long-term.

The following will be discussed only if there is time and documentation available:

- (6) evaluate the JARPA abundance estimates, focusing on minke whale estimates; and
- (7) initiate planning of in-depth assessment of sei whales.

North Pacific common minke whales (NPM)

The following issues are high priority topics:

- (1) conclude discussions about stock structure in the Sea of Japan;
- (2) consider new information on J-stock animals along the Pacific coast of Japan; and
- (3) integrate information from abundance estimates with the assumption of $g(0)=1$ in surveyed areas.

Stock definition (SD)

The following issues are high priority topics:

- (1) statistical and genetic issues relating to stock definition (including further discussion of DNA data quality, and guidelines for appropriate analysis);
- (2) progress on TOSSM; and
- (3) criteria for unit-to-serve.

Southern Hemisphere whales other than Antarctic minke whales (SH)

The following issues are high priority topics:

- (1) humpback whales - complete the assessments of BSB and BSC and continue assessment of breeding stocks D, E and F; and
- (2) blue whales (with emphasis on non-Antarctic blue whales).

Small cetaceans (SM)

The following issues are high priority topics:

- (1) review systematics, population structure and status of common dolphins;
- (2) review progress on previous recommendations; and
- (3) review takes of small cetaceans.

Whalewatching (WW)

The following issues are high priority topics:

- (1) discuss the proposal for a large-scale whalewatching experiment (LaWE);
- (2) review whalewatching in Portugal (Azores, Madeira), Canary Islands and Strait of Gibraltar;
- (3) assess the impacts of whalewatching on cetaceans; and
- (4) review reports from Intersessional Working Groups.

The following will be discussed only if there is time and documentation available:

- (5) consider information from platforms of opportunity of potential value to the Scientific Committee;
- (6) review whalewatching guidelines and regulations; and
- (7) review risks to cetaceans from whalewatching vessel collisions.

DNA (DNA)

The following issues are high priority topics:

- (1) review genetic methods for species, stock and individual identification;
- (2) review GenBank sequence assessment for species assignment and continue discussion of plans for GenBank sequence assessment for species assignment;
- (3) collection and archiving of tissue samples from catches and bycatches; and
- (4) reference databases and standard for diagnostic DNA registries.

Special Permits (SP)

- (1) review report from the Specialist Workshop to evaluate results from JARPN II; and
- (2) receive (but not review) cruise reports from ongoing Special Permit programmes.

BUDGET

Table 8 under Item 22 (SC Report, pp 74-78) gives the funding requirements requested by the Committee for the 2008/09 intersessional activity and for Invited Participants to the SC61. We owe special thanks to Nicky Grandy and Sean Moran for their help in supporting our request.

The Commission approved a budget of £305,400. A summary of the approved budget is shown at the end of this document.

COMMISSION DECISIONS

Much of the Commission's deliberations this year were focused on the future of the IWC. There were no resolutions and no instructions of direct relevance to the priorities of the Scientific Committee in the 2008/09 period.

In the remainder of this note, other Commission decisions and discussions relevant to our work are outlined mainly based on the relevant parts of the IWC Press Release. The full press release provides further details on the Commission meeting (<http://www.iwcoffice.org/meetings/meeting2008.htm>).

Whale stocks

When receiving the Scientific Committee's progress on whale stocks, the Commission paid special attention to the status of the endangered western North Pacific gray whale, whose feeding grounds coincide with oil and gas operations off Sakhalin Island, Russian Federation. The population numbers only about 120 animals and although there is evidence that it has been increasing at perhaps 3% per year over the last decade, any additional deaths, for example in fishing gear as has recently occurred, put the survival of the population in doubt. The Commission agreed to work together to try to mitigate anthropogenic threats to this endangered population.

The Commission also noted that ship strikes and entanglements are also a threat to the endangered western North Atlantic right whale population, which numbers around 300, and agreed again that anthropogenic mortality should be reduced to zero as soon as possible.

Aboriginal subsistence whaling

Last year, the Commission established catch limits for aboriginal subsistence whaling activities in the USA, Russian Federation, Denmark (Greenland) and St. Vincent and The Grenadines. The main issue this year was a proposal by Denmark for a strike limit of 10 humpback whales annually for the period 2008-12 for West Greenland. The Scientific Committee had agreed that this strike limit would not harm the population. Discussion in the Commission focused on whether or not Denmark (Greenland) had satisfactorily documented their need for the additional whales. The Commission was deeply divided over this matter, and the proposal was defeated by voting.

Special Permits

The issue of special permit whaling is controversial within the Commission and, as in previous years, strong statements were made both for and against special permit whaling. This year, the Scientific Committee completed its work to develop a new method for the review of such permits. This will involve holding a small expert workshop that will be able to review new proposals, or the results of existing proposals, in an independent manner. Details can be found in [Annex P](#). The new process will be used for the first time to review the results of the JARPN II programme. The Commission endorsed this process.

Environmental issues

The Commission discussed a number of matters related to environmental factors that affect cetaceans. In particular, the Commission noted that the Committee will be holding two important workshops during the intersessional period: one on the effects of climate change on cetaceans; and the other on the second phase of the Commission's POLLUTION 2000+ programme looking at the effects of chemical pollutants on cetaceans.

Small Cetaceans

The Commission received the review of **small cetaceans in the southeastern Pacific** region (Columbia, Ecuador, Peru and Chile) and progress on previous Scientific Committee recommendations on small cetaceans. With regard to previous recommendations, most serious concern relates to the probable extinction of the **vaquita** unless immediate action is taken. There are at most 150 animals left of this species, which is only found in the upper Gulf of California, Mexico. The Committee strongly recommended that if extinction is to be avoided, gillnets should be removed from the range of vaquitas immediately. The Committee encouraged the international community, including IWC member countries and NGOs to assist Mexico in their conservation measures. The Committee also reaffirmed its concern about the conservation status of the **Boto**, and the fact that directed killing of this species continue without restriction or catch limits; the population has probably declined by over 50% in the last decade. The Committee recommended that immediate steps be taken by Brazil, Colombia, Peru and Venezuela to stop this hunt, and that range states provide information to next year's meeting on progress in this regard. Finally, the Committee reiterated its concern for the stocks of **Dall's porpoise** off Japan and repeated its previous recommendation that catches should be reduced to sustainable levels, that the bycatch levels be quantified and that a full assessment of each of the affected populations be conducted as soon as possible. The Commission endorsed the recommendations of the Scientific Committee with a number of countries echoing the Committee's concerns over these issues. Mexico announced that it has a US\$16m fund for the recovery of the vaquita. Brazil stated that it has established a national working group to examine the issue **of the Boto**.

Conservation Committee

The Commission discussed the report of its [Conservation Committee](#). The first item on its agenda related to the occurrence of small numbers of 'stinky' inedible gray whales in the hunt off Chukotka, Russia. Research is underway to try to determine the cause. Attention then turned to the issue of ship strikes (collisions of whales with ships). The Commission has developed an international database to collect information on this problem in order to help it assess its conservation importance by species and area and to assist in the development of mitigation measures. A dedicated section of the IWC website is being developed on the issue of ship strikes and the Commission is working with a number of other relevant organisations on this. The Commission has agreed to assist in providing relevant information and data for inclusion in the database. The Commission also received proposals for development of conservation and management plans as important future tasks for the Conservation Committee.

Summary of budget for the Scientific Committee approved by the Commission for the coming year

Plenary Item first	Short title	Reduced (£)
RMP		
Item 5.1; Annex D	RMP MSYR intersessional meeting	3,000
Item 6.2; Annex D	Second Intersessional Workshop for the North Atlantic fin whale <i>implementation</i>	8,000
Item 5,8 Annex D, E	Continue augmentation of the Committee's computing capabilities with respect to RMP and AWMP <i>implementations</i>	20,000
Item 6; Annex D	Investigate the apparent anomalies between the results of allozyme analyses and DNA-based analyses	14,500
AWMP		
Item 9	Workshop on Greenland fisheries	8,000
IA		
Item 10.1.2; Annex G	Continue development of statistical catch-at-age estimators for Antarctic minke whales	2,000
Item 10.1.2; Annex G	Independent reading of Antarctic minke whale earplugs	10,000
Item 10.1.1; Annex G	Workshop to complete abundance estimates for Antarctic minke whales using the IWC/SOWER data	8,000
Item 10.1.1; Annex G	Import and analysis of 2007/08 SOWER data	10,000
Item 10.1.1; Annex G	SOWER 2008/09 cruise and planning meeting	67,700
SH		
Item 10.2; Annex H	Workshop on modelling methodologies for mixing and substructure of humpback whale populations	10,000
Item 10.2; Annex H	Development of additional humpback whale assessment models	2,000
Item 10.2; Annex H,	Antarctic humpback whale catalogue	6,600
Item 10.3; Annex H	SH blue whale photo-ID catalogue	7,800
SD		
Item 11.2; Annex I	Progress on the TOSSM project	17,000
BC		
Item 7.1.3, Annex J	Develop web based system for data entry into IWC global ship strike database	2,000
E		
Item 12.2; Annex K	Workshop on Climate Change Implications for Cetaceans	22,500
Item 12.3 Annex K	Modelling workshop: Pollution in the 21st century	1,000
Item 12.5; Annex K	State of the Cetacean Environment Report (SOCER)	2,000
SP		
Item 17.2.2	JARPN II review Workshop	15,000
WW		
Item 15.1; Annex M	LaWE Steering Group meeting	3,000
DNA		
Item 16; Annex N	Sequence assessment for species assignment for sequences deposited in GenBank in 2007	2,500
OTHER		
Item 19.2	Participation in conference on marine mammal protected areas	10,000
ALL	Invited Participants to the 2009 Annual Meeting	52,800
	Total	305,400

