

Updates on Intersessional Work

Executive Secretary

Introduction

This document is provided as a high-level summary of the main work which has taken place or is planned during the 2012-2014 intersessional period.

Bureau

The Bureau met for the first time by telephone in March 2013, and will meet in person in September 2013 in St Lucia. Key items for discussion include the processes for administering the Commission's intersessional work programme and advance logistical preparations for IWC65 in 2014.

Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling Sub-committee

The Scientific Committee has continued to receive and collate data on aboriginal subsistence whaling operations and will provide a report to the ASW Sub-committee when it next meets in 2014. In addition, the Scientific Committee continued its on-going work to provide ASW advice.

The Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling Working Group (ASWWG) is chaired by the USA and it has worked by correspondence to address the seven long term issues previously identified. The ASWWG is also considering an invitation to meet with native hunters.

Conservation Committee

A project to update and publicise the IWC's Ship Strike database was supported by the research fund in 2012-13, and a similar proposal has been made for 2013-14. A co-ordinating workshop on ship strikes, developed through the WKM&AWI Working Group will also be held in the same time period. The workshop will provide opportunity for the development of the strategic plan identified at IWC64 in 2012.

The Standing Working Group on Whalewatching held a whale watch operators workshop in Brisbane in 2013. The workshop made a number of recommendations to support the IWC's role in whalewatching, and the Group will now move forwards with implementation of the remaining actions in its intersessional work plan. This work is being undertaken in conjunction with the Scientific Committee's whalewatching sub-committee.

The Standing Working Group on Conservation Management Plans met in Brisbane in 2013. The Group reviewed the IWC's progress on CMPs, in particular with the three plans already established. A list of 21 actions was developed to continue the Group's work in the run up to IWC65.

The first of two workshops to consider and address the effects of marine debris on cetaceans was held in the USA in May 2013. The workshop examined the evidence base of the various ways in which cetaceans interact with and are harmed by oceanic debris. A second workshop is being planned for 2014 to examine policy options for responding to the specific issues.

Finance and Administration Committee

Provisional financial statements for the 2012-2013 financial year have been provided to the Bureau.

The Budgetary Sub-committee will work by correspondence in the second quarter of 2014 to develop a budget for approval at IWC65.

The Working Group on Provision of Assistance to Governments of Limited Means is being taken forwards by St Lucia.

The UK has continued to act as Chair of the Intersessional Correspondence Group on Strengthening IWC Financing. The Group has developed an intersessional work plan covering: (1) the development of recommendations for improvement of financial processes and administration; and (2) long term financing strategy. The Group will report to the F&A Committee at IWC65.

The USA is Chair of the Working Group on Operational Effectiveness and Cost Savings Measures. The Group may give consideration to examining the processes available for Commission intersessional decision making ahead of IWC65.

Infractions Sub-committee

No intersessional work is required, and the Infractions Sub-committee will next meet immediately prior to IWC65 in 2014.

Scientific Committee

The Scientific Committee met on Jeju Island in June 2013 at the invitation of the Government of Korea (SC65a). The report of its meeting is available at <http://iwc.int/index.php?CID=204>

During this meeting all of the scientific sub-committees were convened as anticipated in the work plan presented at IWC64 in 2012. Selected achievements include:

- The Committee received and accepted an updated abundance estimate for the Bering-Chukchi-Beaufort Seas stock of bowhead whales. The survey was undertaken in 2011 and was unique in that it included multiple methods of data collection. The survey result indicated an annual rate of increase of 3.7%, and this trend was consistent with previous findings.
- The *Implementation Review* for the North Pacific stock of common minke whales was completed. This process was extended from the normal two year duration because of the complexities associated with the particular stock. The Committee was not able to finalise the estimates of abundance for use in applications of the RMP, and time to undertake this task has been included in the work plan.
- The Committee received final reports or progress updates from previous projects funded under the Voluntary Fund for Small Cetacean Research. Thanks to recent voluntary funding from a number of Contracting Governments and Observer Organisations the Committee was also able to endorse funding for a further five projects.

In keeping with its normal practice the Committee developed a work plan for the year ahead and a draft agenda for its next meeting in 2014. These can be viewed through the Committee's report.

Working Group on Whale Killing Methods and Associated Welfare Issues

At IWC64 in 2012 the Working Group endorsed a set of proposals to address human impacts on cetaceans in the wider Caribbean. These proposals included convening an interdisciplinary ship strike workshop and two large whale entanglement training workshops. To date, one of the large whale entanglement workshops has been completed and advanced preparations are underway for the second. The ship strike workshop will be convened in late 2013/2014. The Secretariat has worked closely with the UNEP-CEP Secretariat in the administration of these workshops.

The Commission endorsed a proposal to hold a workshop on euthanasia of large whales. The United Kingdom offered to co-ordinate this initiative and the workshop will be held in London in September 2013.

The Secretariat was also requested to: (a) develop a database of external experts in animal welfare related to work being undertaken by the Commission; and (b) to recommend opportunities for co-operation with other animal welfare bodies. This work will be undertaken in late 2013/2014.