

Comments on the 5-year Strategic Plan for Whalewatching for review by the Sub-Committee on Whalewatching

IWC/63/CC3 reported the conclusions of the Working Group on Whalewatching to finalise the 5-year Strategic Plan for Whalewatching. Each of the five objectives – research, assessment (monitoring), capacity building, development and management – identify a suite of short and medium term actions. Only one long-term action – an integrated research plan – is identified.

The sub-committee, noting the ambitious scale of the current, science-related work programme outlined in the draft Strategic Plan, proposed to review, revise, and provide scientific guidance on the nature and scale of priorities in the Plan, both through the joint Working Group and intersessional review.

To this end the 5-year Strategic Plan was sent to all members of the Sub-Committee on Whalewatching for review, comment and discussion at the 2012 meeting in Panama. Comments received are detailed below.

Objective 1 - Research

The necessary principles and tools **would/will be** developed to assist in ensuring that whalewatching does not **have a significant** adverse impact on the **integrity**, behaviours and fitness of individual cetaceans or populations, or on their habitats.

Comment [n1]: I would revise these first sentences (in Objectives 1 and 2) to the active voice, as in “Develop the necessary principles and tools to assist in ensuring...”

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Action 1.1 - Develop (and/or review), pending further comprehensive scientific research and assessment (**refer to** action 1.3), **guiding principles to be followed in whalewatching operations to minimise potential adverse impacts.**

Comment [CC2]: Probably has to be defined

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Action 1.2 - Identify data deficient and critically endangered populations likely to be subject to whalewatching. Develop guidance on additional mitigation measures that may be required for whalewatching operations on such populations.

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Action 1.3 - Consider an integrated research program (a form of long term experiment)⁴ to better understand the potential impacts of whalewatching on the demographic parameters of cetacean populations. **Seek** to:

- demonstrate a causal relationship, **if one exists**, between whalewatching exposure and the survival and vital rates of exposed cetacean individuals;
- understand the mechanisms involved in causal effects, if they exist, in order to **help** define a framework for improved management; and
- establish standard methodologies for the conduct of assessments.

Action 1.4? – Establish advice to set up schemes for data collection from platforms of opportunity (=ww vessels) including options for coping with species-specific and behavior-specific responses to ww vessels

Comment [CC3]: Might also fit into capacity building

⁴Such as the LaWE proposal of the IWC Scientific Committee (SC/62/WW6)

Objective 2 - Assessment (Monitoring)

Appropriately scaled monitoring programs **would/will be** developed that maximise the chance of detecting adverse impacts on individual cetaceans and on populations.

Comment [n4]: Again, revise the passive voice to the active voice, as in “Develop appropriately scaled monitoring programs that maximise the chance...”

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Action 2.1 – Collate, review and update ‘operator’ data collection systems and associated templates to ensure they are scientifically **useful** and **data** can be used in future research/analytical studies. (establish according advice, see above)

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Comment [n5]: “Robust” is too much to ask for in some situations, but that does not mean no data collection should occur! Obviously we want data to be useful, but they might still be limited rather than robust. That’s just reality in some regions.

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Action 2.2 - Facilitate the development of common metrics for impact assessments which may be used to inform management of whalewatching activities to mitigate impacts on subject individuals or populations.

Action 2.3 - Improve industry and public access to data, information and research results from monitoring programs.

Objective 3 - Capacity building

Identify methods to facilitate cooperation and information/expertise **sharing** between Contracting Parties and others to support the development of a responsible whalewatching sector and the provision of benefits to local communities.

Comment [n6]: This is already written in the active voice – Objectives 1 and 2 should be the same.

Comment [n7]: We can assist with information sharing, via our SC annex and so on.

Within two years of commencing work on actions to support this objective, undertake a comprehensive review of outputs to allow for activities to be refocused, if required.

Action 3.1 - Identify, on a regional basis, specific capacity building and development needs.

Action 3.2 - Identify, on a regional basis, examples of demonstrated best practice within the whalewatching sector.

Comment [n8]: The SC WW Subcommittee can contribute here, as the studies we conduct and review often evaluate the efficacy of “best practice.”

Action 3.3 - Identify and facilitate opportunities for the transfer (or development where a gap has been identified) of best practice approaches to meet identified capacity building needs.

Action 3.4 - Identify mechanisms to disseminate products developed under the Strategic Plan.

Comment [CC9]: What kind of products are meant here? Has to be clarified

Objective 4 – Development

Recognising that the responsibility for economic, business and social development lies with industry and national governments, facilitate access to funding and development organisations and to information on economic and social cost / benefit analyses required to support the establishment of whalewatching operations.

Action 4.1 - In conjunction with relevant international bodies, facilitate access to guidance for Contracting Parties and others on creating enabling environments for whalewatching operations to market and run their businesses responsibly.

Comment [n10]: We already maintain the compendium of regulations and guidelines – we should do more to promote its availability and ensure that Parties know about it and access it.

Action 4.2 - Identify and list funding and development organisations able to offer assistance relevant to the establishment and maintenance of whalewatching operations at varying scales.

Action 4.3 - Provide advice on the development of ‘communities of practice’ and other collaborative forums to assist communities (and Contracting Parties) seeking to develop whalewatching operations to share information on challenges and opportunities encountered in establishing whalewatching operations.

Action 4.4 - In conjunction with relevant international bodies develop guidance and training tools that address occupational health and safety aspects of whalewatching operations.

Objective 5 – Management

Develop an adaptive management framework for whalewatching, based on best available science, which addresses the needs of management and the industry.

Comment [n11]: Clearly the SC WW Subcommittee’s role here is to be among the most active providers of “best available science.”

Action 5.1 – Complete an inventory (including analyses and case studies) of the spectrum of governance arrangements available to manage the whalewatching sector.

Action 5.2 - Complete an inventory of measures currently utilised to minimise potential impacts on cetaceans and their habitats arising from whalewatching actions.

Action 5.3 - Develop training and education tools for industry practitioners to:

- understand and improve cetacean and visitor safety;
- improve whalewatching practices; and
- enhance visitor understanding and experiences.

Action 5.4 - Develop advice on cost-effective monitoring and compliance regimes and alternative strategies to promote environmentally responsible whalewatching.

Here again, options for coping with species-specific and behavior-specific responses to ww vessels should be considered

Also, considering best practices can be incorporated into management in terms of learning from best practices and using them to establish adaptive management (i.e. on the basis of “lessons learned” (see 4.3)

Comment [n12]: Isn't this the compendium we are already maintaining? The analyses and case studies are additional, I suppose, but the compendium is the inventory...isn't it?

Comment [n13]: We can provide input on this, as again many of the studies we review and conduct are about the efficacy of management measures.