

SC/66a/SH/24

Interim Report on expenditure of Scientific
Committee contribution of funds toward
coordination of the Southern Ocean
Research Partnership (IWC-SORP)
2014/15

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INTERNATIONAL
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ABSTRACT

The Southern Ocean Research Partnership (IWC-SORP) was proposed to the International Whaling Commission (IWC) in 2008 with the aim of developing a multi-lateral, non-lethal scientific research programme that would improve the coordinated and cooperative delivery of science to the IWC. There are now 11 IWC member states in the Partnership. These members are represented on the IWC-SORP Scientific Steering Committee.

At its 65th annual meeting (IWC65), the IWC approved a contribution of 13,000 GBP toward the salary of an IWC-SORP coordinator for the period 2014/15 and 2015/16. The contribution of these funds toward the salary of the incumbent coordinator, Dr Elanor Bell, was subsequently approved by the IWC-SORP Scientific Steering Committee. The payment has been made in full to the IWC-SORP Secretariat, based at the Australian Antarctic Division, Kingston, Tasmania. This paper reports on expenditure against this contribution since 1 July 2014.

KEYWORDS: SOUTHERN OCEAN RESEARCH PARTNERSHIP, IWC-SORP, COORDINATION, FUNDING

INTRODUCTION

The Southern Ocean Research Partnership (IWC-SORP) was endorsed by the IWC in 2009 and is now an integral part of the IWC process. The Partnership includes 11 IWC member states: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Chile, France, Germany, Italy, New Zealand, Norway, South Africa and the United States.

IWC-SORP is similar in nature to other regional collaborative programs such as SOWER and POWER. IWC-SORP delivers Southern Ocean whale research, fully aligned with IWC priorities, and benefits from large scale collaboration. The Partnership's research priorities were identified and endorsed by the Scientific Committee. The research is managed through large scale, multi-national projects which develop and apply the latest in non-lethal research techniques. The research is coordinated by a coordinator based at the IWC-SORP Secretariat (currently located at the Australian Antarctic Division, Kingston, Tasmania).

The scientific outputs from IWC-SORP are geographically delivered primarily to the SH sub-committee, IWC-SORP has delivered research through many more sub-committees and working groups: the foraging ecology work through EM, IA and increasingly SD; and the killer whale work to SM.

The Scientific Committee receives annual reports on the progress of IWC-SORP research projects and future plans compiled by the IWC-SORP coordinator. The Scientific Committee subsequently directs the research activities of IWC-SORP via the IWC-SORP coordinator through its annual meetings.

At its 65th annual meeting (IWC65), the IWC approved a contribution of 13,000 GBP toward the salary of the IWC-SORP coordinator for the period 2014/15 and 2015/16. This paper reports on expenditure against this contribution since 1 July 2014.

ACTIVITIES FUNDED

The primary roles of the IWC-SORP coordinator are to:

- Ensure maximum efficiency through the oversight of all IWC-SORP projects to avoid duplication of effort and ensure synergy between projects to maximise scientific outputs.

- Sustain the momentum of the IWC-SORP collaborative research effort.
- Ensure communication of high-calibre scientific research to the Scientific Committee, the IWC and the wider scientific community.
- Leverage funding and collaborative opportunities.

Since 1 July 2014, the funding received from the IWC has been used to support the IWC-SORP coordinator one day per week. The coordinator has:

- Ensured efficient communication between researchers involved in IWC-SORP, the IWC-SORP Scientific Steering Committee, the IWC-SORP Secretariat, the wider scientific community.
- Written applications for vessel time to support IWC-SORP field research, the outcomes of which are pending. Examples include applications for ship time on the *RV Polarstern*, *RV Aurora Australis* and *RV Investigator*.
- Pursued funding and voluntary contributions to IWC-SORP, in particular additional contributions from the Australian Government and the Governments of other partnering member states.
- Supported the preparation for and implementation of the two IWC-SORP voyages to the Southern Ocean that took place in early 2015:
 1. 2015 joint New Zealand-Australia Antarctic Ecosystems Voyage to the Balleny Islands, Ross Sea and Terra Nova Bay, involving IWC-SORP researchers from New Zealand, Australia, the United States, the United Kingdom (SC/66a/SH7); and
 2. 2015 voyage to the western Antarctic Peninsula, an initiative of the South American Consortium led by Argentina. This voyage involved IWC-SORP researchers from Argentina and the United States (SC/66a/SH).
- Promoted the use of the IWC-SORP sightings portal (<http://www.marinemammals.gov.au/sorp/sightings>) and coordinate the submission of images and associated data. Promotional flyers and posters in 6 different languages were produced and dispatched to 18 International organisations including polar programme and tourist operators to promote the initiative. This has led to several hundred sightings reports and images being submitted to the IWC-SORP Secretariat.
- Facilitated the dissemination of data, particularly the flow of data and photo-ID images from databases, to international catalogues, IWC-SORP project Partners, the wider scientific community following data sharing protocols and agreements facilitated by the co-ordinator.
- Managed and implemented the exchange and archival of biopsy samples and associated data, also requiring following data sharing protocols and agreements facilitated by the co-ordinator. For example the exchange and archival of IWC-SORP blue whale skin and blubber samples between the Australian Antarctic Division, Kingston, Tasmania, and the Southwest Fisheries Science Center, La Jolla, United States.
- Engaged in outreach with other organisations operating in the Southern Ocean to ensure data valuable to IWC-SORP and the wider IWC is collected whenever possible, and in a coordinated, standardised and efficient manner. These organisations include national Antarctic programs, CCAMLR, COLTO, SCAR, IAATO, and other vessels of opportunity. Notably, this has resulted in CCAMLR fisheries observers agreeing to share images collected during scheduled observer trips with IWC-SORP.
- Carried out additional Secretariat duties such as budget management, coordination of data sharing agreements, preparing letters of support/endorsement for grant applications submitted by IWC-SORP researchers, coordination of IWC-SORP Scientific Steering Committee activities.

A detailed description of IWC-SORP activities for the period 2014/15 that required oversight and coordination can be found in SC/66a/SH8.

EXPENDITURE TO DATE

Income: **13,000 GBP**

Expenditure: Contribution to coordinator salary 1 day per week for 48 weeks since 1 July 2014 = 52 x 145:
6,960 GBP

Funds remaining: **6,040 GBP** for expenditure in 2015/16

Acknowledgements

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