

Minutes of the Conservation Committee Planning Meeting

Date: Thursday, 4 June 2015 at 9.30 am

Location: Point Loma (Level 1, South Tower)

Purpose of the meeting: To provide an update on progress since IWC65, identify priorities and major deliverables in the lead up to IWC66, and discuss a work-plan and reporting framework for the Conservation Committee

Summary of agreed recommendations:

Agenda Item	Subject	Recommendation
4a	Planning	Agreement to develop a strategic planning document for the Conservation Committee.
4b	Ship strikes	(1) Write to the IMO and Arctic Council to propose measures to reduce ship strikes; (2) Contact the IMO to provide the information document as proposed by the Scientific Committee and (3) commence development of a ship strikes strategic plan.
4d	Bycatch	Development of a paper ahead of IWC66 in 2016 on options for reducing bycatch. Outline of what a CMP for bycatch might look like.
7	Sanctuaries	Agreement to form a small correspondence group to examine broader sanctuary issues.

1. Welcome

The Chair (Jorge Maksabedian, Mexico) welcomed delegates to the meeting. The list of participants is given at Annex A.

2. Adoption of the agenda

The adopted agenda is given at Annex B, and the list of documents available to the meeting at Annex C.

The Secretary agreed to act as rapporteur.

3. Nomination of Conservation Committee Vice Chair

There was no discussion under this item.

4. Update on progress and identification of priorities and major deliverables

a. Conservation Committee

The meeting discussed the strategic purpose of the Conservation Committee and in particular how the Committee adds value to the work undertaken by the Scientific Committee. Australia noted that many of the items which are priorities for the Conservation Committee are also worked on by the Scientific Committee and that this created potential for duplication.

The United Kingdom referred to the Scientific Committee's discussions on its own effectiveness, and suggested a requirement to analyse where the Scientific Committee is already effective and where the Conservation Committee should seek to add value by providing support. By way of practical example, Australia referred to recent work on whale watching in Panama where the Scientific Committee had reviewed data on operations¹, and consequently the Conservation Committee's role was to reach out to local authorities to draw their attention to the Commission's guidance on best practice.

The USA noted that within the IWC the Scientific Committee is a mature body with a wide agenda and that its practice was to provide advice to the Commission. In contrast the Conservation Committee was a

¹ Report of the Scientific Committee, San Diego, 2015, Item 15.1.1

more developmental body with the potential to (1) provide advice on conservation priorities and (2) to advance any management or policy actions which are required to deliver against the conservation priorities. It suggested that a schematic diagram indicating how the Scientific Committee, Conservation Committee, Commission and Secretariat interact would be helpful.

The Secretary noted that in order to advance many of the management actions being discussed within the Scientific and Conservation Committees it was necessary to engage with other Inter-governmental organisations including those with regulatory competence (for example, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) when dealing with questions of ship strikes or shipping noise), as well as those tasked with advancing conservation issues in their own right, for example the Convention for Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Convention for Migratory Species (CMS).

Mexico supported the need to prioritize recommendations and suggested the need to include deadlines for achieving action, and that this was especially necessary given the limited time the Conservation Committee had available for its meetings.

The meeting noted the relationship between prioritisation and the overall purpose of the Conservation Committee, and recalled the statement of purpose included in Resolution 2003-1 and that it would be helpful to revisit this document.

It was also noted that an outward facing public document clearly explaining the work of the Conservation Committee may help attract contributions to the Voluntary Conservation Fund and help with measuring success. It was **agreed** that the current Conservation Committee work plan could not be used for this purpose but was an important internal document for use by the Conservation Committee in planning its work. The UK agreed to update the current work programme based on the outcomes of the meeting.

Following the above discussions, the meeting **agreed** to develop an outward facing (public) strategic planning document for the Conservation Committee. This document will outline (1) the structure, i.e. how it fits within the IWC, its broad role, measurable goals/objectives and its priorities; (2) how the Committee is adding value to the work already undertaken by the Scientific Committee; (3) what has been achieved to date and (4) how the Committee will engage with its range of stakeholders including other inter-governmental organisations.

b. Ship Strikes Working Group

The UK noted that within the Scientific Committee discussions had focused, in part, on the communication between the IWC and the IMO². The Scientific Committee had identified a series of ship strike mitigation measures that had been implemented worldwide and recommended that the IWC build a long term relationship with the IMO. This raised the question of whether the recommendation would be taken forwards by the Scientific Committee, the Conservation Committee or by the Secretariat.

A similar example was raised by the convenor of the Scientific Committee's Environmental Concerns group who noted a recent recommendation from the group to co-ordinate with the IMO and the Arctic Council in order to reduce risk of ship strikes in the Arctic. This request also highlighted the question of how to advance management recommendations arising within the IWC.

The meeting noted that the development of a Strategic Plan for Ship Strikes may be beneficial in progressing the recommendations from the Panama Ship Strikes Workshop. The Chair of the Ship Strikes Working Group and the Chair of the Human Induced Mortality Sub-committee were asked to jointly consider whether this could be progressed.

The Chair of the Conservation Committee's Ship Strikes Working Group (SSWG) noted the need to assign these key actions, including (1) the preparation of a ship strikes strategic plan³; (2) the information document for the IMO as recommended by the Scientific Committee; and (3) an annual report sanctioned by the IWC that is passed to the IMO as a contribution to the IWC's observer status. In assigning these tasks the Chair of the SSWG recommended there was a role for the Conservation Committee and noted

² See Item 7.3 of the Report of the Scientific Committee, San Diego, 2015 (SC66a).

³ This plan will feed into the overall Conservation Committee strategic plan.

that regular co-ordination with the convenor of the HIM group in the Scientific Committee would be essential.

Australia noted the opportunity of an annual joint SC-CC meeting to provide a formal mechanism to advance progress on these actions, and that the strategic planning process would establish a series of defined tasks which would guide the actions of the Scientific Committee, Conservation Committee and Secretariat.

Following the above discussions, the meeting **agreed** to:

- 1 Write to the IMO and Arctic Council to propose measures to reduce ship strikes along arctic shipping routes, including the consideration of a proposal to request space for Observers on Commercial Vessels along the NSR;
- 2 Contact the IMO to provide the information document and annual updates as discussed above; and
- 3 Commence the development of a ship strikes strategic plan.

c. Whalewatching Standing Working Group (USA)

DISCUSSION ON WHALEWATCHING HANDBOOK

The USA noted that a joint meeting of the Scientific Committee and Conservation Committee's respective whalewatching groups had taken place in San Diego on 20 May 2015. One of the key items discussed was progress towards the development of the on-line handbook, and the USA noted that the handbook would take the form of a web portal containing information presented in levels of increasing detail, each of which could be individually printed off as users required. The information would be tailored to different constituency groups including academia and industry and a beta version of the website would be available by IWC66 in 2016. It would be prepared by a small group of members of the whalewatching Working Groups, two members from the Scientific Committee and two from the Commission during a visit to the Secretariat using funding from a previous voluntary contribution. The USA noted that the joint meeting also discussed approaches to whalewatching capacity building.

Australia highlighted whalewatching as an IWC success story and indicated that it had secured funding to develop a whalewatching network amongst states of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA). A start-up meeting for this project was planned for first quarter of 2016, most likely in Sri Lanka. This network would draw heavily on work conducted through the IWC's Scientific Committee and its outcomes would be of value to regulators and operators alike.

In this context Australia also highlighted that the IWC's Five Year Strategic Plan for Whalewatching runs from 2011 to 2016 and that work should commence on an update next year in order that the document remains current.

DISCUSSION ON TRANSMISSION OF ADVICE TO GOVERNMENTS

The UK raised the question of how advice on whale watching generated through the Scientific Committee is transmitted to operators or to relevant national authorities. In response Australia suggested that the way the advice is couched is likely to be an element of how it is received by a country, and that the Conservation Committee was in a position to look at ways of gentle engagement. Mexico noted the requirement to identify a key person or institution within the country, and the USA reflected that the recommendations endorsed by the Commission can also be influential, especially where they can be transmitted through regional country groupings. The UK noted that continuing to study the way advice is received, and whether it has led to changes on the ground are also important.

d. Conservation Management Plans Standing Working Group

Australia, as Chair of the CMP Standing Working Group recalled that a CMP workplan was endorsed at the Conservation Committee's last meeting in Slovenia in 2014 and that the current priorities are to:

- Update the website by adding the workplan and indicating achievements to date;
- Integrate work on marine debris into existing Conservation Management Plans; and
- Investigate how to progress actions to improve the conservation status of Arabian Sea humpback whales.

In regard to the last of these priorities, Australia noted there may be some concern from the range states of the Arabian Sea humpback population because of restrictions which a CMP may place upon them, and hence there was a need to build understanding that CMPs were owned by the member countries. This USA noted the large number of range states including Yemen and Somalia, and that it may be easier to make progress by working with scientists in the respective states in order to build greater understanding of issues. The USA commented that the Arabian Sea humpback population, and also the effects of ship strikes on blue whales in the waters off Sri Lanka are the most important conservation issues in this region. Australia referred to the IWC's work on regional inventories of cetacean conservation measures including the one which had been completed for the Pacific Ocean. Noting that 2016 was the Pacific Year of the Whale it considered that updating the inventory would be a useful contribution, and that a similar inventory should be prepared for the Indian Ocean in order to identify any gaps.

Argentina updated the meeting with progress under the South-western Atlantic CMP for Southern right whales. It indicated that the CMP approach had allowed priorities identified through the Scientific Committee to be combined with those raised through the Conservation Committee. Recent progress included completion of a workshop to reduce kelp gull harassment. Iñiguez' role as co-ordinator of the Southern right whale CMP ended in October 2014, although he had continued with the role in order to present the report of this workshop to the Scientific Committee. He indicated that the range states intended to meet to discuss how the co-ordination work would continue.

Argentina drew attention to work towards establishing a CMP process for franciscana⁴. A workshop would take place in October 2015 with representatives from three governments in order to :

- Identify the most appropriate population(s) to work on; and
- Consider the franciscana as a potential candidate for a CMP with support from relevant stakeholders including representatives from three governments.

DISCUSSION OF USE OF CMPS TO TACKLE THREATS TO CETACEANS

The UK observed that the IWC was developing various levels of response to issues addressed through the Conservation Committee. For example, following the initial establishment of a concern there was often a follow up workshop, and recently the development of task teams⁵, and then at the highest level the development of a CMP. The UK noted the recent decision to integrate concerns on debris into existing CMPs and posed the question of how the IWC could best tackle the effects of bycatch given the widespread nature of this very important threat.

The USA noted the work being established through the Secretariat on entanglement prevention and that this was generating useful insights into the most effective approaches. The USA also remarked that, just as for CMPs, productive engagement with range states was critical.

Mexico remarked on the large scale of the bycatch issue and Australia noted that, at present, there was relatively little international co-operation on this subject. Therefore establishing a group to consider a workshop on adjustments to fishing practices may be beneficial. The UK noted the bycatch issue could be approached either through a dedicated CMP, or as a welfare issue, and that establishing a source of funding would be important.

Following the above discussions, the meeting **agreed** to convene a correspondence group to develop a paper for IWC66 in 2016 on options for reducing cetacean bycatch and how this work best fitted within the work and structures of the IWC. The group was asked to consider all options for implementation and to develop its views by working jointly with both the Conservation and Scientific Committees. The group was also asked to provide a detailed outline of what a CMP for bycatch might look like, how it would be structured, and what it could potentially cover, i.e. individual welfare implications vs population impacts, in order to help understand more generally what a threat based CMP could look like. Simmonds agreed to act as convenor, and the membership was Schweizer, Iniguez, Rojas-Bracho, Garcia and Brockington.

⁴ See discussion at section 14.5.1 of the Report of the Scientific Committee, San Diego, 2015 (SC66a).

⁵ See discussion at section 14.5.1 of the Report of the Scientific Committee, San Diego, 2015 (SC66a).

e. Marine Debris

The UK reported that the debris workstream was appropriately embedded in the work of the Scientific Committee and that there had been a good response to the issues of entanglement and ingestion. It noted the recent discussion on incorporation of debris concerns into existing CMPs and the inclusion of recommendations on monitoring and interaction with other inter-governmental bodies contained in the 2014 Scientific Committee report⁶. In order to continue progressing the work it asked the Secretariat to engage with the recommendations arising from the Scientific Committee's Environmental Concerns correspondence group.

f. Anthropogenic sound

The USA noted that it was working domestically to develop an ocean noise strategy which builds on the work undertaken through its Cetacean and Sound Mapping project. In addition, the Scientific Committee's Environmental concerns group had agreed to focal topic session at the 2016 Scientific Committee meeting on the masking effects of underwater sound⁷.

The meeting **agreed** to maintain a watching brief on this issue, noting the Scientific Committee was beginning to give this greater consideration.

5. IWC work on Welfare, and implementation of the Welfare Action Plan

The UK provided an update on the Commission's welfare work and the implementation of the action plan agreed at IWC65 in 2014. It noted the opportunity to take forward some of the actions through the Scientific Committee, for example by understanding welfare aspects related to ship strikes or entanglement events⁸. A similar approach was required to identify any welfare concerns associated with issues progressed through the Conservation Committee.

6. Development of content on the IWC's conservation activities for the IWC website

The Secretariat updated the meeting on recent additions to the IWC website on conservation activities. These included (1) pages explaining the work of all Commission sub-groups with associated links to key work programs; (2) extensive updates to pages describing progress under the small cetaceans fund; (3) updated pages on progress with Conservation Management Plans. Updates to further pages on chemical pollution and anthropogenic sound were underway.

Participants thanked the Secretariat for its work and suggested the possibility of placing the Conservation Committee at the head of the pages on conservation and management in a similar way to the placement of the Scientific Committee page at the head of the pages on science items.

The meeting discussed ways to give greater prominence to the production of specialist reports, and discussed ways to navigate to the individual pages dealing with specialist areas.

7. Sanctuaries

Australia noted the joint process taking place between the Scientific and Conservation Committees in order to conduct the decadal review of the Southern Ocean Sanctuary and to complete the review of the proposed South Atlantic Whale Sanctuary⁹. However, Australia also observed that the sanctuary's original proposals reflected the period of their development and that modern MPA practice had developed substantially. This raised questions which included, for example, how the two existing IWC sanctuaries (and the third proposed SAWS sanctuary) were expected to co-support each other, how modern MPAs relate to sanctuaries established under the ICRW, how management plans could be established and how they might support the role of IWC sanctuaries. In particular Australia noted that it was important to understand how IWC sanctuaries related to emerging work on high seas biodiversity and associated marine protected areas.

In response to questions from USA and Mexico, Australia indicated that the Commission had not, as yet, requested this additional work be undertaken but that it nonetheless presented an opportunity for the Conservation Committee to undertake a longer term piece of work on the relationship between IWC

⁶ See discussions at section 12.7.1 of the Report of the Scientific Committee, San Diego, 2015 (SC66a).

⁷ See discussions at item 12.4.2 of the Report of the Scientific Committee, San Diego, 2015 (SC66a).

⁸ See discussions at item 27.5 of the Report of the Scientific Committee, San Diego, 2015 (SC66a).

⁹ See discussions at item 18 of the Report of the Scientific Committee, San Diego, 2015 (SC66a).

sanctuaries and MPAs in a broader context, including work on Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction and the CBD's work on Environmentally and Biologically Sensitive Areas (EBSAs).

Mexico noted that in 2014 the Scientific Committee had recommended the SAWS proponents develop revisions to the proposal in order to take account of issues including monitoring and objectives with respect to issues of carrying capacity and critical habitat. These revisions would make a contribution to the development of a sanctuary management plan.

Following the above discussions the meeting **agreed** to form a small email correspondence group to look at how the Conservation Committee could effectively feed into the review process by providing policy advice to supplement advice from the Scientific Committee and to consider more broadly the role of sanctuaries in light of current understanding on marine protected areas.

8. Proposal for a work-plan and reporting framework for the Conservation Committee

The meeting discussed the opportunity to provide the Commission with work plans (to show intent) and / or a reporting framework (to show progress). Both approaches would be based on the range of recommendations arising from specialist workshops and the scientific committee, and would be a way of demonstrating how the Conservation Committee would add value as discussed under Agenda Item 4a.

The meeting noted that the development of work plans would provide an opportunity to discuss and present the financial costs of implementing the conservation recommendations, and as such would provide a basis for procuring voluntary contributions or seeking funds from external partners.

The meeting recognised the synergy with the reporting framework currently under development by the Secretariat and encouraged an approach whereby Chairs or Convenors of individual groups would be able to make updates themselves.

a. Role of the Voluntary Conservation Fund

The meeting noted the creation of the Voluntary Conservation Fund as agreed at IWC65 in 2014. There was no further discussion under this item, except to recognise that the fund was now able to receive contributions and could play a role in delivering the costed work plans described under item eight.

9. Close

The meeting closed at 12.30hrs

Annex A

List of Participants

ARGENTINA

Juan Pablo Paniego
Miguel Iñíguez

AUSTRALIA

Chris Schweizer

MEXICO

Jorge Maksabedian
Lorenzo Rojas-Bracho

UK

Jamie Rendell
Mark Simmonds

USA

Bob Brownell
Doug DeMaster
Melissa Garcia
Sue Moore

IWC Secretariat:

Simon Brockington

Annex B

Agenda

Purpose of the meeting: To provide an update on progress since IWC65, identify priorities and major deliverables in the lead up to IWC66, and discuss a work-plan and reporting framework for the Conservation Committee

- 1. Welcome**
- 2. Adoption of the agenda**
- 3. Nomination of Conservation Committee Vice Chair**
- 4. Update on progress and identification of priorities and major deliverables**
 - a. Conservation Committee (Mexico)
 - b. Ship Strikes Working Group (USA)
 - c. Whalewatching Standing Working Group (USA)
 - d. Conservation Management Plans Standing Working Group (Australia)
 - e. Marine Debris
 - i. Entanglement
 - ii. Bycatch
 - iii. Marine debris
 - f. Anthropogenic sound
- 5. IWC work on Welfare, and implementation of the Welfare Action Plan**
- 6. Development of content on the IWC's conservation activities for the IWC website**
- 7. Sanctuaries**
- 8. Proposal for a work-plan and reporting framework for the Conservation Committee**
 - a. Role of the Voluntary Conservation Fund

Annex C

List of documents available to the meeting

- Summary of the main outcomes, decisions and required actions from the 65th meeting
- IWC/65/Rep05 Rev2 – Report of the Conservation Committee
- IWC CC Table: Summary of tasks identified for the intersessional period 2012-14
- Conservation Committee Minutes, 26 May 2013
- Proposals for a programme to deliver an IWC Workshop on Marine Debris

Background Documents:

- Summary of the main outcomes, decisions and required actions from the 65th meeting
- IWC/65/Rep05 Rev2 – Report of the Conservation Committee
- IWC CC Table: Summary of tasks identified for the intersessional period 2012-14
- Conservation Committee Minutes, 26 May 2013
- Proposals for a programme to deliver an IWC Workshop on Marine Debris