

## **Eastern South Pacific Southern Right Whale Conservation Management Plan Draft Implementation Strategy 2016-2018**

Submitted by Chile

With less than 50 mature individuals, eastern South Pacific southern right whales population found off Chile and Peru is one of the most threatened whale populations worldwide.

The eastern South Pacific Southern Right Whales CMP submitted by Chile was endorsed by IWC in 2012. In 2016, Peru was welcomed as second range state and a revised CMP has been submitted by Chile and Peru.

According to Guidelines for Cetacean CMP funding support may be available from IWC. The revised CMP considered bi-national steering committee meetings and appointment of coordinator as priorities, and it has identified priority actions and processes for its implementation. Most of what is expressed in this CMP implementation strategy has been expressed in the revised CMP and is only intended to provide more insights on the short-term actions (2016-2018).

### **Summary of priority actions**

In the light of the new information on distribution and the progress made on different CMP activities, some key actions have been identified and should be address in the short term (two years).

According to the revised CMP, these include at least to: conduct coordination meetings among stakeholders (COORD-01); increase survey efforts on possible breeding ground (RES-05), photo ID (RES-02) and genetic data (RES-03); build and strengthen capacities, including additional entanglement response workshops in both countries (PACB-02) increase species identification capacities along the coast of Chile and Peru (PACB-03); and provide advice on whale watching regulations for the species (MIT-03).

This prioritization doesn't preclude that further work on other priority actions identified are also advanced.

The revised CMP is clear in stating that the most important *initial stages* are:

- (1) appointment of a bi-national Steering Group and co-ordinator;
- (2) development of the actions outlined, including all aspects of funding and, as appropriate, contracts to undertake actions.

Contributions from Range States and other funding sources in support of all the activities described below may be estimated on GBP 200,000.

### ***Coordination meetings among stakeholders (COORD 01)***

Guidelines for cetacean CMPs suggest that sufficient funds must be made available for the appointment of a co-ordinator and the functioning of the Steering Group. Serious consideration should be given also, early in the development process, to the involvement of stakeholders, and this may include IWC Range States, non-member Range States, non-government organisations, scientists, industries, communities and civil society more generally.

The highest priority identified for 2016-2018 under the revised CMP will be to appoint a bi-national Steering Group and contract a part time co-ordinator for the next two years period. Meetings will include members of Range States, the Chair of the Scientific Committee and the Chair of the Conservation Committee Standing Working Group on Conservation Management Plan. They will review, *inter alia*, advances of the CMP and report to IWC Scientific Committee, Conservation Committee and the Commission.

An initial meeting is planned to establish the Steering Group and appoint a co-ordinator. Two additional meetings of the Steering Group are planned prior to IWC Scientific Committee meetings. The Steering Group may also seek to involve additional experts and NGOs among others, at the earlier stage possible.

Involvement of a wide range of stakeholders is critical for this CMP. There is no identified aggregation area of eastern South Pacific southern right whales and monitoring is currently based on opportunistic sightings that rely in the engagement of several scientists, communities, NGOs, etc., along their distribution range.

Funding from IWC CMP fund is sought exclusively for coordination and meetings of the Steering Group and is estimated on 60,000 GBP. Details are given below.

#### ***Increase survey effort on possible breeding ground (RES-05)***

One of the highest priorities in the short-term of the revised CMP is also to identify a breeding aggregation area for this population (RES-05). This will allow the implementation of a long-term dedicated monitoring program, rather than from opportunistic sightings, greatly improving current knowledge on the species. Until a breeding ground is identified, priorities such as monitoring on distribution, abundance and trends (MON-01), potential threats, effectiveness of mitigation measures (MON-02) and actions to monitor the southern right whales are unlikely to be properly implemented.

In June 2016, the Scientific Committee approved - from the IWC research fund - a research proposal on passive acoustic monitoring that will help in identifying a breeding area and the CMP goals. Passive acoustic monitoring at possible hotspots of the species range is likely the most cost-effective way to investigate the seasonal distribution of southern right whales along the coast of Chile and Peru.

Data analysis will be in-kind. Ship time to deploy and retrieve devices will also be in-kind. Collaboration will be sought to attach the acoustic devices to existing moorings. IWC research fund will contribute with the acquisition and import of acoustic devices as well as travel costs for researchers to deploy and retrieve the devices.

#### ***Increase efforts to collect photo ID and genetic data (RES-02 and RES-03)***

Although reported sightings document the species with photographs, most of the time it is not possible to get adequate individual photo-identifications. Most of the sightings are just recorded on one day, making it difficult to follow the whales and get photo-identifications and/or biopsy samples.

From September 2012 to March 2016, at least 14 sightings of 23 animals, including six calves, have been positively documented as southern right whales. Of these sightings, only four individuals were photo-identified, representing about 18% of animals sighted. Furthermore, there was no collection of genetic samples (RES-03).

It is extremely important to increase effort to collect photoID and genetic data necessary to monitor the population. However, until a breeding area is identified, these activities will have to continue to rely on opportunistic sightings.

Although not identified as a priority in the short-term (next two years), the Steering Group may consider to also advance in setting -up a web-base platform to facilitate a rapid response of expert teams (COORD-02) and to report southern right whale sightings (RES-01). This great tool will improve communication and coordination under the Eastern South Pacific SRW CMP.

### ***Strengthen capacities on entanglement response in both countries (PACB-02)***

During the IWC southern right whale assessment workshop in 2011, it was noted that two mortality events were very high compared to mortality events from South Africa and other regions where the populations are much larger. Furthermore, an entangled southern right whale was reported on October 2014 in central Chile.

Mitigating large whale mortality from entanglements is most efficiently implemented by establishing 'disentanglement networks' and therefore the revised CMP identified the need to establish emergency disentanglement teams (PACB-02).

In this sense, IWC entanglement response training workshops were conducted in Chile on November 2015 and in Peru on September 2016.

Periodical development of such training workshops is required to increase the number of people that can assist entangled whales and facilitate the development of national entanglement response networks on both countries.

An additional IWC entanglement response training workshop, with participants from Chile and Peru may also be envisaged, at the discretion of the Steering Group.

### ***Increase species identification capacities along the coast of Chile and Peru (PACB-03)***

Population range extends more than 4,000km near the coastline and sightings are difficult to document. It is extremely important to strengthen public participation in the reporting of sightings.

Sighting networks have already revealed to be a cost-effective tool in increasing sighting records of the species. The strengthening of sighting networks and capacity building in species identification and sighting reporting are the initial step of this process.

Providing groups, organizations, governments and societies with suitable access to information and knowledge regarding the status of southern right whales in the eastern South Pacific is essential for achieving the conservation objectives.

The development and distribution of an informative poster on coastal communities is a useful tool, not only to increase species identification capacities along the coast of Chile and Peru (PACB-03) but also to improve sighting reporting (RES-02) and create public awareness (PACB-01).

Additionally, the Steering Group may consider developing capacity building workshops on species identification to train observers on board fishing and/or research vessels.

### ***Provide advice on whale watching regulations for the species (MIT-03)***

Unregulated approaches to mothers and calves may seriously disrupt nursing behavior and could result in negative impacts. These include, among others, displacement of mother-calf pairs and increase of swimming behaviour thereby altering the energetic expenditure of the animals. In extreme situations, they may even cause the death of the animals.

The revised CMP identified as a priority action the development and implementation of a contingency plan to afford maximum protection when a sighting is recorded (MIT-03). A whale watching regulation and enforcement should be considered for the species.

In Chile, only land-based whale watching of the species is permitted under national whale watching regulations adopted by the Ministry of Economy in 2012 (MFA, 2014). In Peru a working group was established with several governmental institutions to develop whale watching regulations.

The adoption and enforcement of whale watching regulations in Range States may greatly benefit from the advice of the IWC whale watching working group.

### **Deliverables and Reporting**

It is the responsibility of the appointed coordinator and Steering Group to provide annual progress reports to the IWC about the work undertaken under the CMP, specifically to its Scientific and Conservation Committees. A major review of work, including the possibility of updating the CMP should occur every four-six years (depending on the timetable of actions within the plan).

Each coordination meeting will provide a report of the meeting with its outcomes, review process and modification of strategy if applicable. The report will be submitted to the IWC Scientific Committee as well as to the IWC Conservation Committee and to the Commission.

Scientific papers of the passive acoustic monitoring project will be submitted to the Scientific Committee in 2017 and 2018, in accordance to the IWC Scientific Committee procedures. It is expected to increase the likelihood to identify a breeding area where more dedicated research can increase data collection (photo-ID and genetics) and long-term monitoring of the population.

Media releases and use of social network are also considered to promote the implementation of the passive acoustics project, training workshops and any opportunistic sighting. It will also help to amplify public awareness on the critical conservation status of this population and the importance of the proper implementation of the CMP.

### **Budget Proposal for IWC CMP Fund**

The following budget considers an exchange rate of US\$1.2 per one GBP.

<b>ITEM</b>	<b>TOTAL GBP</b>
Airflight tickets (four people from Range States, Chair of Scientific Committee and Chair of CC/SWG-CMP)	18,000
Lodging (six persons, three nights)	6,000
Per Diem (thirteen persons, two days)	4,000
Coordinator Compensation (1,333GBP per month, 24 months) <sup>1</sup>	32,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>60,000</b>

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<sup>1</sup> Estimated in 40% time dedicated, using as basis the South West Atlantic Southern Right Whale CMP.

## Proposed Timeline

	2016		2017												2018												
	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	
Coordination meetings	■					■												■									
Increase survey efforts on possible breeding ground				■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Increase efforts to collect photo ID and genetic data								■	■	■	■	■	■							■	■	■	■	■	■	■	
Strengthen capacities on entanglement response											■	■															
Increase species identification capacities						■	■	■	■											■	■						
Provide advice on whale watching regulations for the species				■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■