

## **Progress Report by the IWC Strandings Coordinator**

(September 2018)

Karen Stockin, Strandings Coordinator, IWC Secretariat

### **INTRODUCTION**

Over recent years, there has been widespread acknowledgement within the IWC of the significance of stranding events to cetacean populations. At IWC66, the Commission endorsed the recommendations of the Scientific Committee (SC) and the Whale Killing Methods and Welfare Issues Working Group (WKM&WI WG) with respect to an IWC Strandings Initiative, including the establishment of an Expert Panel and Strandings Coordinator post.

A progress report on the Strandings Initiative was considered by the Scientific Committee at its most recent meeting (IWC/67/Rep01(2018), Annex K, Appendix 2). The Scientific Committee endorsed a proposed governance structure for the Strandings Initiative, including for a Strandings Steering Group, replacing the intersessional steering group under the Scientific Committee and including representatives from the Whale Killing Methods and Welfare Issues Working Group and Conservation Committee. The SC also endorsed a two-year work programme for the strandings initiative and discussed budgetary implications.

In April 2018, the Secretariat, in consultation with the strandings intersessional steering group and the Expert Panel appointed Dr Karen Stockin for a one year 0.5 FTE position as the Stranding Coordinator.

### **Key tasks and responsibilities of the Strandings Coordinator role include to:**

- Lead the strategic development and review of the Strandings Initiative in close collaboration with the Strandings Steering Group.
- Develop capacity building/ training programmes for emergency response in case of live cetacean strandings and large-scale mass mortality events through specific guidelines and training workshops using IWC-endorsed curricula.
- Coordinate the IWC Expert Panel to develop a strategy for handling requests received by the Secretariat for strandings training, analyses, investigation, and/or response; convene Expert Panel meetings and workshops as required and facilitate the provision of scientific and technical advice on Strandings response and training from the panel.
- Identify and pursue fundraising opportunities to support the delivery of the Strandings Initiative.
- Coordinate IWC Stranding Initiative efforts with those of other organisations who share similar responsibilities and goals and represent the IWC at relevant meetings and events.
- Prepare and disseminate reports on progress to the Strandings Steering Group, the IWC Scientific Committee and the Whale Killing Methods and Welfare Issues Working Group and to other parts of the Commission as required.

## INITIAL PROGRESS

- Participation (via skype) at SC67b, Bled, Slovenia in support of the Strandings Initiative and associated programmes (April-May 2018).
- Review and update of Expert Panel and Steering Group membership (June-July 2018).
- Coordination of Expert Panel in response to initial funding assistance request made to the Strandings Initiative (April 2018): An initial request from Argentina was made to the Strandings Initiative in response to a mass stranding of common dolphins that occurred in the Golfo Nuevo, Peninsula Valdes, Argentina, Sunday 25th March. Both funding (£5,000) and deployment of regional expertise was requested and approved in support post-mortem analyses relating to this incident.
- Organisation of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Expert Panel Virtual Meeting (August 2018): Agenda items included identification of fund-raising opportunities to support Emergency Responses and Training, and refinement the terms of Emergency Response (including criteria for activation of Emergency Response support, access to funding and deployment of regional experts).
- Preliminary review of strandings materials provided by Project Jonah NZ and GMAST USA and British Divers Marine Life Rescue UK (August 2018) to help identify current training materials available that can be fully reviewed and built upon as part of the Strandings Initiative.
- Engagement with IUCN Wildlife Health Specialist Group (IUCN-WHSG) and CITES to assist in the development of a procedure for transboundary transport of diagnostic specimens for cetacean disease investigations in emergency situations.
- Engagement with IGOs (ASCOBANS, IUCN New Zealand Committee) and other external organizations (NOAA, IFAW) to identify capacity requirements and potential synergies. The role of the Strandings Coordinator is to seek engagement with external organizations in order to identify areas of mutual interest and engagement within the Strandings Initiative.
- External engagement (Royal Veterinary College London, Animal Welfare Expertise and Animal Welfare Science and Bioethics Centre) regarding welfare frameworks and the potential for welfare assessment during stranding events.
- Chairing of a “Welfare in the Wild” Workshop, 32<sup>nd</sup> European Cetacean Society, La Spezia, Italy (April 2018) focusing on the design and application of welfare science to stranded cetaceans, with emphasis placed on how welfare can directly impact conservation outcomes via survivorship.
- Overview of Strandings Initiative to be presented at 24th ASCOBANS Advisory Committee Meeting, Vilnius, Lithuania (September 2018).

## UPCOMING WORK

Subject to commission approval, over the next two years the Strandings Coordinator, working with the Expert Panel and Steering Group will:

- (i) Perform one to three in-country trainings at the request of member countries: Building capacity in stranding response and investigation.

- (II) Respond to one to three cetacean events if requested: Developing investigations, focusing on welfare issues, logistics, and diagnostics to better understand the circumstances and determine the cause(s) or contributing factor(s) for these stranding events.
- (III) Develop standardized protocols/procedures for Emergency Response including the identification of best practices and funding opportunities.
- (IV) Develop materials/information dissemination through in person or virtual meetings, workshops, or websites to include live stranding and dead animal response and investigations.

If feasible, the Strandings Coordinator will convene an in-person meeting of Expert Panel at the at the Second World Conference of the Society of Marine Mammal Science and European Cetacean Society, Barcelona, Spain, 2019.

#### **Annex 1. Additional information on strandings work plan and budget 2019-2020**

At its meeting in April 2018 (SC67b) the Scientific Committee recognised the importance of the continued development and operations of the Strandings Initiative, and in particular highlighted four funding areas of focus, including:

- I) Strandings Coordinator: funding for salary; position to be filled through the Secretariat and evaluated annually to assess workload and utility.
- II) In-Country Training: funding to build capacity in stranding response and investigation.
- III) Emergency Response and Investigations: funding for travel for stranding response, logistics, and diagnostics to better understand the circumstances and determine the cause(s) or contributing factor(s) for the stranding events and/or mitigate welfare concerns.
- IV) Standardization of protocols, procedures and best practices: funding for development of materials/information dissemination through in person or virtual meetings, workshops, or websites.

The Scientific Committee endorsed a request for £9,000 for Emergency Response and Investigations to the Scientific Committee budget 2018-2020. In addition, a successful application was submitted to the IWC welfare fund for £10,000 to support strandings training in Chile/Peru. This and additional funding needs are outlined below:

Activity	Expected Results	Timeline	Budget Implications 2018-2020	
			Type (Salary, Travel, Meeting Services, Equipment, Other)*	Estimated Cost (GB pounds)
Coordinator salary	Development and implementation of Strandings Initiative	Contract extension up to IWC68	Salary and insurances (£32,000 for 20-month extension), travel (£5,000)	£42,000
In country training/capacity building	3 in-country trainings (Based on estimated costing of Peru/Chile training 2018/19)	By IWC68	Cost per training: travel/Subsistence (£30,000); Reusable equipment (£3,000); consumables (£1,500); services (£3,000), shipping of carcasses (£2,000)	£120,000 <sup>1</sup>
Emergency response and investigations	Response and investigation of 1-3 events (depending on need and costs)	By IWC68	Travel (£4,000), supplies for sample collection and storage (£1,000), diagnostics analysis and syntheses for emergency responses (£4,000)	£9,000 <sup>2</sup>
Standardization of protocols, procedures and best practices	Overview of existing protocols, procedures and best practices	Workshop at Second World Marine Mammal Conference. Final Report by IWC68	Venue hire, catering, printing (£500), conference registration (£1,500) and travel of invited participants (£6,000)	£8,000
<b>Total</b>				£179,000

<sup>1</sup> £10,000 received from welfare funds to support training in Chile/Peru

<sup>2</sup> The SC (April 2018) recommended an allocation of £9,000 from the research fund. Pending confirmation by the Commission at IWC67.