

Overview of the work of the technical adviser to the Secretariat to assist with reducing conflicts between cetaceans and marine resource users: October 2016 through August 2018

Mattila, D

Technical Advisor – Human Impact Reduction
Secretariat to the International Whaling Commission
Center for Coastal Studies

INTRODUCTION

At the 66th annual meeting of the International Whaling Commission in Portoroz, Slovenia, the previous work of the Technical Advisor was received, commended and urged to continue (item 6, Report of the 66th meeting of the International Whaling Commission, 2016). The work is carried out in partnership with the Center for Coastal Studies (CCS, Provincetown, MA, USA), by a shared staff member (David Mattila), 2/3 of whose time is allocated to the IWC specific work. The work supports a welfare initiative begun by Australia, Norway and the USA concerning the sometimes severe welfare issues associated with large whale entanglement in manmade materials (IWC, 2012). Given the growing evidence that large numbers of whales are accidentally wounded or killed each year incidental to human activities, this IWC initiative has been timely and well-received by participating countries, IGOs and NGOs. Significant, specific progress has been made between IWC66 and IWC67 including continued capacity building on the issue for an additional 200 trainees representing at least five countries (Table 1).

Work on several key aspects of this initiative is planned to continue between IWC 67 and 68, during which the TA will: 1) continue to **build capacity**, for better welfare and management outcomes, 2) help to collect better data to understand the issue (e.g. through capacity building and assisting in the establishment of an IWC **global database on entanglement**), 3) work toward prevention in collaboration with the new IWC Bycatch Mitigation Initiative Coordinator, 4) work with the IUCN to convene a joint workshop to investigate and facilitate the identification of areas that represent high risk for ship strikes, and 5) continue to integrate this work into other IWC initiatives where appropriate (e.g. CPPS). Much of this work will be facilitated, complemented and expanded by continuing to work with relevant IGOs (e.g. FAO-COFI, CPPS, UNEP, IUCN etc).

The following is a brief summary of the work carried out by the technical assistant between IWC66 and IWC67:

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Working closely with the Secretary, Commissioners from relevant countries, Commission sub groups and panels (in particular the entanglement expert advisory group), as well as cooperating organizations (e.g. UNEP, CPPS, SPREP, NGOs...etc.), the technical advisor has helped to organize, conduct and/or represent the IWC at the following:

- Arranged for and supervised two **entanglement apprenticeships** (2-3 weeks duration) in New England (USA), for training participants identified from Chile and Oman.
- As part of the partnership with CCS, assisted with research studying various aspects of humpback whale health, and the **impacts of entanglement and implanted satellite tags** (July 2018).
- Gave invited overview presentations on the entanglement issue and the IWC initiative(s), to:
 - **ICMMPA4** workshop on entanglement response cooperation (Pt. Vallarta, 2016)
 - **SPREP** Sponsored “Whales in a Changing Ocean Conference” (Tonga, 2017)
 - Two workshops on bycatch hosted by the **Society for Marine Mammalogy** (Halifax, Canada, 2017).
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- Represented the IWC at:
 - **IUCN workshop** on Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMA) in the South Pacific (2017, Apia, Samoa)
 - The 2017 annual meeting of the **Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP)**. (Apia, Samoa)
 - **FAO-COFI** Technical Consultation for Guidance on Marking Gear (2018, Rome, Italy).

Table 1 Organized and/or Conducted IWC endorsed, **entanglement response training for**

Date	Host country	classroom only	at sea	trainer(s)
9-10/10/2016	Pattaya, Thailand †	48	12	Mattila
3-4/06/2017	Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk ††	48	22	Mattila & Sharp*
13-14/06/2017	Arica, Chile	12	14	Mattila & Ulloa
11-12/09/2017	Sortland, Norway	8	16	Mattila
12-13/09/2017	Colombia	17	14	Frisch and Beets**
TOTALS		133	78	

† Combined with IWC sponsored Stranding Symposium

†† Combined Entanglement and Stranding response training

* Stranding co-trainer

** first fully Spanish-speaking training

At large whale entanglement response training workshops in Russia, Chile and Colombia, a second trainer assisted (usually a former apprentice). The goal, beyond managing the large number of trainees, is to increase the number of individuals qualified to give the IWC endorsed training (i.e. training the trainers). This has resulted in the first fully Spanish-Speaking IWC training.

The TA also assisted with convening and participated in several IWC intersessional workshops, including:

- “Entanglement response: International networking in N. America” (Pt. Vallarta, Mexico, November, 2016)
- Small group meeting to design international database for entanglement response (Pt. Vallarta, Mexico, 2016)
- Fourth IWC workshop on **Entanglement Impacts and Response** (Provincetown, June, 2018)

Costs of attending most of the conferences and workshops were provided by the host organizations, or by the USA, UK, France and NGOs through voluntary contributions to the IWC entanglement fund.

UPCOMING WORK

Much of the work undertaken for the IWC by the technical adviser has been well received by the participants and partnering countries, and organizations (i.e. IGOs, NGOs). As such, the requests for both capacity building and collaboration on technical matters with other IGOs have continued. The following is some of the work requested to occur between IWC67 and IWC68:

- First official combined stranding and entanglement response training (Fall 2018, Lima, Peru)
- Co-convene workshop on the utility of using IUCN IMMAs to help identify IWC high risk areas for ship strikes (2019, Greece)
- Planned training for Kenya, Costa Rica and others

REFERENCES

Report of the 66th meeting of the International Whaling Commission, 2016, Portoroz, Slovenia.
<https://archive.iwc.int/pages/view.php?ref=6834&k=d001be2e01>