

Brazil Voluntary Cetacean Conservation Report 2018

Submitted by Brazil

[VCR Template]

1. Legal developments (laws, regulations and other regulatory measures related to cetaceans).

The government of Brazil established two large Federal Marine Protected Areas in 2018, including the two most remote islands of the national territory - the São Pedro and São Paulo archipelagos - and also the chain of submarine mountains that connects the Brazilian continental shelf to the Trindade and Martin Vaz Archipelago. The two MPAs together cover an area of 92.6 million hectares, of which 81.1 million hectares correspond to areas of sustainable use and 11.5 million hectares correspond to protection, the equivalent of the combined territories of France and Germany. As a result Brazil increased the proportion of protected areas in their marine and coastal waters from 1.5% to 25%, surpassing Aichi's Goal 11 of protecting 10% of those areas until 2020. Additionally the MPAs are aligned with the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (particularly Goal 14), the Paris Agreement and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, particularly with respect to adaptation and mitigation.

Regarding the protection of coastal areas, it is important to mention a new reserve created in Maranhão called Baía do Tubarão Extractive Reserve. This MPA was established to protect a complex of bays, rivers and estuaries, including important habitats for manatees, sea turtles and cetaceans. The area of 223,000 hectares is recognized as an important wetland near the mouth of the Amazon River and classified as a Ramsar¹ site. Furthermore this area is important for traditional fisheries communities, which depend on the local natural resources.

3. Current Government programs related to cetacean conservation.

Since 2016 several national research projects promoting research and conservation of franciscana dolphins have been supported by Brazil, mostly through a Federal-funding program managed by *Fundo Nacional do Meio Ambiente* (FUNBIO). This program has provided about 4 million US dollars to support four projects for the period 2016-2020. These projects are underway in three areas known as Franciscana Management Areas (FMAs Ia, Ib, and III). In addition, a proposal for another management area (FMA II) is under consideration. These projects are focusing on (1) monitoring stranding rates and fishing fleets to estimate franciscana mortality and (2) aerial surveys to estimate abundance. Collectively these projects should provide important new information on bycatch levels and estimates of abundance for the entire distribution range of the species in Brazil. All of these projects address actions considered as a priority by the Conservation and Management Plan (CMP) adopted by the IWC in 2016 and by the Franciscana National Plan developed by the Government of Brazil.

The Brazilian Government has also promoted an increase in research effort to evaluate anthropogenic impacts to cetaceans by providing additional support to the Brazilian stranding network.

¹ Ramsar: Convention on Wetlands - <https://www.ramsar.org/>

4. Current threats to cetacean conservation and management measures taken/proposed.

In 2018, the National Center for Research and Conservation of Marine Mammals of Chico Mendes Institute for Nature Conservation (CMA/ICMBio), an office of the Brazilian Ministry of Environment, conducted a comprehensive assessment of the conservation status of the Brazilian Fauna. A workshop with 25 national marine mammal specialists was conducted in Santos/SP to evaluate current knowledge about the species that occur in the Brazilian waters. In total, information on 49 cetacean species was reviewed and about 21% were placed in an IUCN threatened category (two are Critically Endangered, five are Endangered, and three are Vulnerable). Furthermore, two species were assessed as Near Threatened and 10 were regarded as Data Deficient. It is important to highlight the evaluation of *Inia araguaiensis* (listed as Vulnerable) and *Tursiops gephyreus* (listed as Endangered) at the species level for the first time. Review workshops for proofing and validating the assessments are now being conducting and results will be available later this year.

A series of workshops are being conducted by ICMBio in 2018 to evaluate the progress in addressing Action Plans and to elaborate a new five-year cycle to further evaluate the main threats and to reduce the risk of extinction of threatened cetacean species. This initiative is in line with CBD's Target 12² to remove these species from threatened Red List categories, to prevent species listed as Near Threatened from becoming threatened and to enhance knowledge of taxa listed as Data Deficient. In February 2018 a workshop was held in Santos/SP to evaluate the progress of actions listed in the last five-year cycle of the National Action Plans of Aquatic Mammals. In August 2018 ICMBio conducted a workshop with the participation of 30 people, including scientists, managers and representative of local communities to elaborate the new Action Plan for river dolphins. A workshop is planned to occur in October 2018 in Brasilia to elaborate the new Action Plans for marine cetaceans.

5. Reporting systems for cetacean injuries/mortality/strandings.

The National Stranding Network coordinated by ICMBio has been working along the Brazilian coast to evaluate cetacean stranding rates and cumulative effects of anthropogenic activities on these animals. A national database was developed to store the collected information providing the possibility to integrate data (in terms of space and time) and improve the evaluation of threats, as well as support both conservation planning and management actions. As an example, presented during the last Scientific Committee meeting (SC67b), more than four thousand cetaceans were found stranded along the south and southeastern of Brazil in the last three years, mostly apparently by anthropogenic interaction. However, the analyses are ongoing and results will be provided in the future.

6. International cooperation activities (includes bilateral or multilateral cooperation, assistance and funding programs and appropriate contact information, and other international activities of the Country submitting the Report).

Multilateral cooperation to assess the status of the Guiana dolphin (*Sotalia guianensis*) was proposed during the SC67b. This species is considered 'Vulnerable' in Brazil, Colombia and Venezuela and there is an urgent need for action because current threats are rapidly growing and the future of this species is uncertain. A workshop "Status of knowledge of *S. guianensis* and cumulative effects" is being

² CBD's Target 12 says "By 2020, the extinction of known threatened species has been prevented and their conservation status, particularly of those most in decline, has been improved and sustained").

organized during the XII Congreso de la Sociedad Latinoamericana de Especialistas en Mamíferos Acuáticos - RT 18, in Peru in November 2018. The workshop aims to provide a forum for researchers to exchange best available information on *S. guianensis* populations. This workshop was proposed to compile information on distribution and population structure, current and potential threats and to provide recommendations for future research and conservation actions.

7. Other (at the discretion of the Authority submitting the Report).

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