

Report of the Working Group on Ship Strikes

Submitted by the Chair of the Working Group on Ship Strikes (WG-SS)

The Commission is requested to:

- *note the intersessional progress made by the Ship Strikes Working Group and the Scientific Committee*
- *adopt the workplan of the Ship Strikes Working Group*
- *support funding applications, including to voluntary funds, for the proposal in Annex 1*

Intersessional Activity

With his recent retirement from NOAA, Doug DeMaster has decided to relinquish his chairmanship of the WG-SS. It is with sincere appreciation that we thank Doug for his service as Chair. Dave Weller (USA) has agreed to take the role as Chair of the WG-SS and will have the privilege of having Doug's expertise on hand at IWC 67 to aid with this transition.

The "*Strategic Plan to Mitigate the Impacts of Ship Strikes on Cetacean Populations: 2017-20*" was finalized and posted online in March of 2017. The Strategic Plan provides the necessary background, information and recommendations to help the IWC develop approaches and solutions by 2020 to achieve a permanent reduction in ship strikes of cetaceans, both regionally and on a global scale.

Engagement with other organisations

The Secretariat has maintained a dialogue with the IMO Secretariat on ship strike issues, including meetings in April 2018 at the IMO 72nd session of Marine Environment Protection Committee. The ship strike data coordinators have also maintained contact regarding ship strikes with ASCOBANS, ACCOBAMS, the Pelagos Sanctuary Agreement, and with NGOs and shipping and other relevant organizations.

Collaboration with the Scientific Committee

Delivery of the Ship Strikes Strategic Plan has been undertaken in collaboration with the Scientific Committee (SC).

A review of novel methods to better characterize and document ship strikes in SE Alaska was completed during the intersessional period and presented at SC 67b. This work was jointly coordinated by the NOAA Alaska Fisheries Science Center, the University of Alaska Southeast, and the U.S. Park Service. The focus of this effort was to evaluate the effectiveness of combining remote electronic monitoring, passive acoustics, and a remote bio-sampling tool to provide information on ship strikes of cetaceans that may be missed by current or more separate methods.

The fifth and the sixth term of work by the IWC ship strike data coordinators was carried out between May 2016 and April 2018. As part of this work, special attention was dedicated to validation of records in the database, while at the same time continuing the data review process and updating of the database. All incidents since 31 December 1999 have been reviewed and assigned a category in consultation with the Data Review Group. In total, 320 reports were assessed in the last year and are now listed as reviewed cases in the database.

Effort to continue with this assessment will proceed during the next biennium. A number of other activities, including outreach to the media, the authorship of a book chapter on ship strikes, co-operation with the Volvo Ocean Race, and a number of talks at international symposia, were accomplished by the data coordinators (details can be found in the annual reports on data coordination).

A workshop to begin planning efforts to overlay specific anthropogenic threats with recently identified Important Marine Mammal Areas, organized jointly by the IUCN Joint SSC/WCPA Marine Mammal Protected Areas Task Force and by the Agreement on Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and contiguous Atlantic area (ACCOBAMS), was held in April 2018 at the annual conference of the European Cetacean Society. This workshop produced a suite of recommendations that will be further discussed at the proposed joint IWC-IUCN Task Force workshop (see Annex 1). This workshop would further evaluate how the data and process used to identify Important Marine Mammal Areas can assist the IWC to identify areas of high risk for ship strikes.

Conservation Committee Budget Request 2019-20

A request for funding related to the Conservation Committee's work on ship strikes was made at SC 67b. Within the scope of the Ship Strike Strategic Plan, the Secretariat (D. Mattila) outlined a funding proposal (see budget in Annex 1) for a workshop to assess Important Marine Mammal Areas and the applicability of this approach for identifying high risk areas for ship strikes. Both the Scientific Committee and the Ship Strike Working Group have encouraged cooperation between the IUCN TF and the IWC on the topic of IMMAs. The HIM sub-committee noted the utility of the workshop and recommended that it should be funded. A budget request for part of the costs of the workshop was submitted to the Scientific Committee Research Fund.

Given the relevance of this proposal to the delivery of the Ship Strikes Strategic Plan, it is proposed that the Conservation Committee's Ship Strikes Working Group support this workshop and have proposed a budget in Annex 1. While some funding may be obtained through the Scientific Committee Research Fund and voluntary contributions to the Voluntary Conservation Fund earmarked for ship strikes, a shortfall is anticipated. The Working Group proposes applying to the Voluntary Conservation Fund for some or all of this shortfall, in liaison with the Steering Group for the Fund. The final budget will be determined by the Workshop Steering Group and Secretariat after IWC 67.

Scientific Committee Budget Request 2019-2020

In addition to the request outlined above, a request for funding related to the SC's work on the ship strike database was made at SC 67b. This proposal relates to the continued work of the ship strike data coordinators with respect to data review and validation. The sub-committee on Non-Deliberate Human-Induced Mortality of Cetaceans (HIM) recommended that this proposal should be funded over the two-year budget period and given the highest priority of the funding requests put forward by the HIM sub-committee (see IWC/67/Rep01(2018), Annex J)

Work Plan

The WG-SS will continue its role of oversight of the delivery of actions and products under the Strategic Plan. Activities will include:

- Developed a costed work plan for presentation to IWC68 to ensure effective delivery of the Ship Strikes Strategic Plan, in collaboration with the Scientific Committee. This will include identifying key actions, timelines and who will take each action forward.
- Continued engagement with appropriate regional and international bodies addressing ship strikes and help establish opportunities for capacity building.
- Review progress of outreach activities and information dissemination, specifically offering advice on how best to enhance and expand outreach efforts.
- Ensure the continued maintenance, updating and promotion of the ship strike database. Work to foster the submission of data to the IWC ship strike database and finalize assessment of existing records.
- Collaborate with and support relevant workshops, including the proposed workshop to assess Important Marine Mammal Areas and the applicability of this approach for identifying high risk areas for ship strikes.
- Support funding applications to implement the Ship Strikes Strategic Plan, including the project in Annex 1. Note that the budget is in the process of being finalized, and the final amount will be confirmed shortly after IWC 67.
- Respond to SC recommendations on ship strikes directed to the Conservation Committee.

Annex 1 Project Proposal and draft Budget

Project Title

Joint IWC-IUCN workshop to evaluate how the data and process used to identify Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs) can assist the IWC to identify areas of high risk for ship strikes

Lead Working Group

Ship Strikes Working Group of the Conservation Committee
Human Induced Mortality Subcommittee of the Scientific Committee

Project Description

The SC and WG-SS have agreed that the identification of “high risk areas” for ship strikes of cetaceans is a key step toward establishing mitigation actions, through voyage scheduling, re-routing and/or speed reduction. The joint IWC-UNEP workshop (Panama, 2014) noted that the IUCN’s proposed initiative to identify Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs), would likely assist this effort. The SC has encouraged cooperation with the IUCN Task Force on this. The IUCN TF has completed three regional IMMA workshops, including the Mediterranean Sea.

This proposed joint workshop will focus on identifying overlap between shipping and the IMMAs identified in the Mediterranean. The anticipated outcomes are:

- Develop criteria for categorization and prioritization of an IMMA, as a “high risk area” for ship strikes.
- Evaluate Mediterranean IMMAs according to these criteria to examine the utility of this approach
- Test the utility of the regional approach suggested by the WG-SS
- Enhance engagement with other International partners with similar goals
- Report to IWC and IUCN

The workshop will take place as a pre-meeting to the Fifth International Conference on Marine Mammal Protected Areas, 8-12 April, 2019, in Greece. This coordinated timing allows both the workshop and the conference to take advantage of participants with relevant expertise. The location and dates for the workshop have been identified (6-7 April, 2019 in Greece).

Project Justification

Ship Strikes is a priority threat in the Conservation Committee’s Strategic Plan. The proposed workshop will support the implementation of the IWC Strategic Plan to Mitigate the Impacts of Ship Strikes on Cetacean Populations, 2017-2022.

The IWC SC has agreed that the identification of “high risk areas” for ship strikes is a key step in developing mitigation actions. The WG-SS of the Conservation Committee, has also recognized the importance of identifying “high risk areas” in their Five Year Strategic Plan. They have also recognized that the IUCN Task Force on Marine Mammal Protected Areas has undertaken an initiative to identify Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs) around the World, and that the identification of these IMMAs would likely assist the IWC effort. The SC and the WG-SS have encouraged cooperation with the IUCN Task Force on this.

Relevant IWC Voluntary Funds

Voluntary Conservation Fund
Scientific Committee Research Fund (budget request in SC67bRP17)

Overview of activities

The budget below is an estimate and will be finalized directly after IWC 67. A substantial proportion of the costs incurred will be participant’s travel. Hence the final budget will be confirmed once the number of participants is agreed by the Steering Group and their specific travel costs calculated by the Secretariat.

Part of this budget (for 8 participants) has been requested from the Scientific Committee Research Fund, which the Commission will consider at IWC 67. In addition, the USA has contributed to the Voluntary

Conservation Fund to support the workshop. It is proposed that the additional costs required could be sought from the Voluntary Conservation Fund.

Activity	Expected Results	Timeline	Budget Implications	
			Type (Salary, Per Diems, Travel, Meeting Services, Equipment, Other)*	Estimated Cost (GB pounds)
Workshop preparation - produce final agenda, IP list and final cost estimate Steering Committee		December 2018	-	0
Workshop held to immediately prior to ICMMPA5 Conference	Report workshop summary to ICMMPA5	April 2019	Travel & meeting services	£38,000*
Workshop report completed	Report to IWC SC68a	May, 2019	-	0
Dissemination of workshop results to other relevant Organizations (e.g. IUCN, CMS, IMO)	Uptake of recommendations	By 12/2020	-	0
Presentation of report to IWC68	Uptake of recommendations	By 12/2020		0

* This estimate is based on information provided by the local meeting organisers for 20 sponsored participants, and covers international and local travel, accommodation, per diems as well as venue and AV costs. The costs will be refined by the Steering Group for the workshop and the Secretariat after IWC 67 and may be less than outlined here. As noted above, part of this budget has been requested from the SC Research Fund.

Core Secretariat support required – Details needed, to be updated/revised

Type	Detailed description	Number of days
IT/database		
Communications	Promotion of workshop through website, press releases, etc.	1
Meeting Services	Book flights and accommodations for participants	4
Project management	Liaise with partners	5
Technical support	Attend workshop	10
Total		20

Potential partners or funders

Please include a list of all potential partners and funders and their role in this project.

- IUCN Marine Mammal Protected Areas Task Force
- World Wildlife Fund, Greece
- International Fund for Animal Welfare (pending)

Project requirements/Permits/Insurances

Travel insurance required for all participants.

Possible Risks

This will include possible risks or uncertain factors that might have a negative impact on the project and their possible consequences. Add mitigation options, if possible.