



International Whaling Commission

Chairman
Mr Michael Canny (Ireland)

Vice-Chairman
Prof. Bo Fernholm (Sweden)

Secretary
Dr Ray Gambell OBE

RG/JAC/27600

The Red House
135 Station Road
Impington
Cambridge
CB4 9NP, UK

Tel: +44 (0) 1223 233971

Fax: +44 (0) 1223 232876

EMail: iwcoffice@compuserve.com
04 October 1999

CIRCULAR COMMUNICATION TO MEMBERS OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE IWC.SC.29

Workshop on the Status of Western North Atlantic Right Whales

In 1998 an Intersessional Steering Group of the Scientific Committee had been set up to review ongoing work in relation to the status and trends of the North Atlantic right whale population, and to consider whether sufficient progress had been made to hold a workshop on this topic. This was in response to recommendations made at a Workshop on the status of right whales world-wide held in Cape Town, South Africa, earlier in 1998.

At the 1999 Scientific Committee meeting held in Grenada in May 1999, following discussion of a recently published analysis of trends in the survival probability of North Atlantic right whales, the Committee concluded that whilst it had some questions on the approach used, these did not alter its conclusion of 1998 that there are 'serious concerns over the status of the stock'. In connection with this the Committee had recommended that the proposed workshop should occur during the intersessional period provided that the Intersessional Steering Group believed that sufficient progress has been made in the development of a spatial and age-structured model and the necessary participants are available. The model should be brought to the Workshop so that various combinations of parameters can be explored.

Ongoing or recently completed work relating to assessment of status and trends in this population of right whales include:

- A mark-recapture-based survival analysis developed by Caswell *et al.* (1999a, 1999b).
- An interbirth interval model developed by Cooke and applied by Glinka/Brault
- A stage-structured model of survival probabilities developed by Fujiwara *et al.* (1999)
- An age and spatially structured model developed by Wade and Clapham (1999)
- Analyses of reproduction, including interbirth intervals, conducted by Kraus and Knowlton (1999)
- A review of mortality and serious injury (Knowlton and Kraus 1999)
- Various genetic studies (Malik *et al.* 1999a, 1999b, Rosenbaum *et al.* 1999, Waldick *et al.* 1999).

It has now been arranged that the meeting will take the form of an invitational Workshop lasting four days, to be held in Woods Hole, Massachusetts, USA, 24 – 27 October 1999. Invitees have been selected on the basis of their expertise in either quantitative methods or right whale biology.

A likely format for the meeting is as follows:

- Presentation of results of existing work on status and trends
- Discussion of these results to identify any problems, biases, and gaps in data
- Identification of possible solutions to problems and of other potentially productive approaches
- If desirable and practicable, split into working groups to work with data and investigate utility of suggested assessment approaches
- Reconvene to discuss results of working groups
- Conclusions/recommendations.

Further information may be obtained from Dr Phil Clapham (Chairman of the Steering Committee), Northeast Fisheries Science Center, 166 Water Street, Woods Hole, Mass 02543, USA . Tel: +1 508 495 2316; Fax: +1 508 495 2066; e-mail: phillip.clapham@noaa.gov



Dr. R. Gambell
Secretary to the Commission

References

- Caswell, H., Fujiwara, M. and Brault, S. 1999a. Declining survival probability threatens the North Atlantic right whale. *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA* 96: 3308-3313.
- Caswell, H., Fujiwara, M. and Brault, S. 1999b. Stage-structured demography of the North Atlantic right whale: projection matrices, trends in vital rates, and population growth. Submitted to the 13th Biennial Conference on the Biology of Marine Mammals (abstract).
- Fujiwara, M., Caswell, H. and Brault, S. 1999. Stage-structured demography of the North Atlantic right whale: estimation, model selection, and inference. Submitted to the 13th Biennial Conference on the Biology of Marine Mammals (abstract).
- Knowlton, A.R. and Kraus, S.D. 1999. Mortality and serious injury in North Atlantic right whales. *J. Cetacean Res. Manage.* (in press).
- Kraus, S.D. and Knowlton, A.R. 1999. Reproduction in North Atlantic right whales. *J. Cetacean Res. Manage.* (in review).
- Malik, S., Brown, M.W., Kraus, S.D., Knowlton, A.R., Hamilton, P.K. and White, B.N. 1999a. Assessment of mitochondrial DNA structuring and nursery use in the North Atlantic Right Whale (*Eubalaena glacialis*). *Canadian Journal of Zoology* (in press).
- Malik, S., Brown, M.W., Kraus, S.D. and White, B.N. 1999b. Analysis of mitochondrial DNA diversity within and between North and South Atlantic right whales. *Marine Mammal Science* (in press).
- Rosenbaum, H.C., Egan, M.G., Clapham, P.J., Brownell, R.L. Jr., Malik, S., Brown, M., White, B.N., Walsh, P. & DeSalle, R. 1999. Assessing a century of genetic change in North Atlantic right whales (*Eubalaena glacialis*). *Conservation Biology* (in review).
- Wade, P.R. and Clapham, P.J. 1999. Survival of western North Atlantic right whales. Submitted to the 13th Biennial Conference on the Biology of Marine Mammals (abstract).
- Waldick, R.C., Brown, M.W. and White, B.N. 1999. Characterization and isolation of microsatellite loci from the endangered North Atlantic right whale. *Molecular Ecology* (in press).