

Report of the Scientific Committee

Virtual Meetings, 27 April-14 May 2021

Annex A: List of Participants

Annex B: Agenda

Annex C: List of Documents

This report is presented as it was at SC/68C.
There may be further editorial changes (e.g. updated references, tables, figures) made before publication.

**International Whaling Commission
Cambridge, UK, 2021**

Annex A

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H= Head of Delegation; AH = Alternate Head of Delegation

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Annex B

Agenda

1. INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

- 1.1 Chair's welcome and opening remarks
- 1.2 Remembrances
- 1.3 Appointment of rapporteurs
- 1.4 Meeting procedures and schedule
- 1.5 Establishment of sub-committees and Working Groups

2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

3. REVIEW OF AVAILABLE DATA, DOCUMENTS AND REPORTS

- 3.1 Documents submitted
- 3.2 National Progress Reports on research
- 3.3 Data collection, storage and manipulation
- 3.4 Guidance for the format of recommendations and discussion of Recommendations Database
- 3.5 Review of Commission resolutions from 2018

4. COOPERATION WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS

- 4.1 Summary of Secretariat co-operation with other organisations
- 4.2 African States Bordering the Atlantic Ocean (ATLAFCO)
- 4.3 Arctic Council
- 4.4 Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)
- 4.5 Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR)
- 4.6 Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species (CMS)
 - 4.6.1 Scientific Council
 - 4.6.2 Conference of Parties
 - 4.6.3 Agreement on Small Cetaceans of the Baltic and North Seas (ASCOBANS)
 - 4.6.4 Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS)
- 4.7 Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES)
- 4.8 Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO)
- 4.9 Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs)
 - 4.9.1 Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC)
 - 4.9.1 Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC)
- 4.10 IUCN Task Force on Marine Mammal Protected Areas (formerly ICMMPA)
- 4.11 International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES)
- 4.12 International Maritime Organisation (IMO)
- 4.13 International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)
- 4.14 North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission (NAMMCO)
- 4.15 North Pacific Marine Science Organisation (PICES)
- 4.16 Protocol on Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW) of the Cartagena Convention for the Wider Caribbean
- 4.17 Other

5. GENERAL ASSESSMENT AND MODELLING ISSUES (IST)

- 5.1 Use of ISTs for consideration of species' and populations' status
- 5.2 Progress on previous recommendations
- 5.3 Biennial workplan

6. AWMP IMPLEMENTATION-RELATED MATTERS (IST)

- 6.1 Develop plan for *Implementation Review* of West Greenland humpback whales (with NH and IA)
- 6.2 Update ASW in light of results from the 2020 meeting
- 6.3 Develop plan for *Implementation Review* of West Greenland bowhead whales
- 6.4 Progress on previous recommendations
- 6.5 Biennial workplan

7. STOCKS SUBJECT TO ABORIGINAL SUBSISTENCE WHALING (ASW)

- 7.1 New information and progress on recommendations
 - 7.1.1 Eastern Canada/West Greenland bowhead whales
 - 7.1.2 Bering-Chukchi-Beaufort Seas bowhead whales
 - 7.1.3 North Pacific gray whales
 - 7.1.4 Common minke whale stocks off East Greenland
 - 7.1.5 Common minke whale stocks off West Greenland
 - 7.1.6 Fin whales off West Greenland
 - 7.1.7 Humpback whales off West Greenland (see Items 6.1 and 8.2.7)
 - 7.1.8 Humpback whales off St. Vincent and The Grenadines (see Items 6.1 and 8.2.7)
- 7.2 Biennial workplan

8. WHALE STOCKS NOT SUBJECT TO DIRECTED TAKES BY CONTRACTING GOVERNMENTS

- 8.1 Comprehensive or In-depth Assessments (IA)
 - 8.1.1 Comprehensive Assessment of North Pacific humpback whales
 - 8.1.2 Comprehensive Assessment of North Pacific sei whales
 - 8.1.3 Progress on in-depth assessment of western North Pacific common minke whales
 - 8.1.5 Biennial workplan
- 8.2 Potential new assessments: progress on previous recommendations and prioritised workplan (SH and NH)*
 - 8.2.1 Non-Antarctic blue whales in the Southern Hemisphere (SH)
 - 8.2.2 Antarctic blue whales (SH)
 - 8.2.3 Southern Hemisphere right whales not the subject of CMPs (SH)
 - 8.2.4 North Pacific blue whales (NH)
 - 8.2.5 North Atlantic sei whales (NH)
 - 8.2.6 North Atlantic right whales (NH)
 - 8.2.7 North Atlantic humpback whales (and see Items 6.1, 7.1.7 and 7.1.8) (NH)
 - 8.2.8 Gulf of Mexico Bryde's (Rice's) whales (NH)
 - 8.2.9 Biennial workplans
- 8.3 New information (if provided) for other northern stocks (NH)*
 - 8.3.1 North Atlantic blue whales (NH)
 - 8.3.2. North Atlantic common minke whales (NH)
 - 8.3.2 East Greenland-Svalbard-Barents Sea (Spitsbergen) bowhead whales (NH)
 - 8.3.3 Unusual mortality events affecting northern stocks (NH; also see Item 14.3.2)
 - 8.3.2 Biennial workplan

- 8.4 New information (if provided) for other Southern stocks (SH)*
 - 8.4.1 Southern Hemisphere humpback whales (If new information from Australia provided for estimating BSD)
 - 8.4.2 Southern Hemisphere fin whales (SH)
 - 8.4.3 Biennial workplan
- 8.5 Progress on previous recommendations
- 9. STOCKS THAT ARE OR HAVE BEEN SUGGESTED TO BE THE SUBJECT OF CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLANS (CMP)
 - 9.1 Stocks with existing CMPs: new information and progress with previous recommendations
 - 9.1.1 SE Pacific southern right whales (CMP, SH)
 - 9.1.2 SW Atlantic southern right whales (CMP, SH)
 - 9.1.3 North Pacific gray whales (CMP, IST, ASW)
 - 9.1.4 Franciscana (CMP, SM)
 - 9.2 Progress with identified priorities
 - 9.2.1 Humpback whales in the northern Indian Ocean including the Arabian Sea
 - 9.2.2 Central American humpback whales
 - 9.2.3 Mediterranean sperm whales
 - 9.2.4 Mediterranean fin whales
 - 9.2.5 South American river dolphins
 - 9.3 Progress on previous recommendations
 - 9.4 Biennial workplan
- 10. STOCK DEFINITION AND DNA TESTING (SD-DNA)
 - 10.1 Provide advice to other sub-groups on population structure for requested stocks
 - 10.1.1 North Pacific gray whales
 - 10.1.2 Franciscana
 - 10.1.3 *Sotalia guianensis*
 - 10.2 DNA data quality and genetic analyses guidelines
 - 10.3 Recommendations on the avoidance of sample depletion
 - 10.4 Review terminology used for stock structure related terms used within the IWC
 - 10.5 New genetic approaches of use to the Scientific Committee in addition to stock structure issues
 - 10.6 Progress on previous recommendations
 - 10.7 Biennial workplan
- 11. CETACEAN ABUNDANCE ESTIMATES and STOCK STATUS (ASI)
 - 11.1 Review of abundance estimates
 - 11.1.1 Franciscana
 - 11.1.2 Southern Hemisphere non-Antarctic blue whales
 - 11.1.3 North Pacific humpback whales
 - 11.1.4 North Pacific sei whales
 - 11.1.5 Address issues related to abundance estimates for western North Pacific common minke whale
 - 11.2 Review and provide advice on surveys (past and future)
 - 11.3 Methodological issues
 - 11.3.1 Amendments to RMP guidelines to consider model-based abundance estimates
 - 11.3.2 Progress on simulation software to evaluate methods for abundance estimates
 - 11.3.3 Consider diagnostic methods for mark-recapture models
 - 11.4 Provide advice to the Commission on the status of stocks

11.5 Progress on previous recommendations

11.6 Biennial workplan

12. BYCATCH AND ENTANGLEMENTS (HIM)

12.1 IWC's Bycatch Mitigation Initiative

12.1.1 Update on progress of Expert Panel

12.1.2 Review new information on bycatch for priority locations and focal species for pilot projects

12.1.3 Review new information for identifying pilot projects or capacity building

12.1.4 Assist BMI in identifying bycatch hotspots by reviewing cetacean distribution, fishing effort and bycatch

12.1.5 Review of other activities and provision of advice, if requested

12.2 Collaboration on bycatch mitigation with IGOs (including FAO, Regional Fisheries Management Organisations and others)

12.3 Review bycatch risk assessments

12.4 Review new methods and estimates of entanglement rates, risks and mortality

12.5 Reporting of bycatch and entanglements (both small and large cetaceans) including National Progress Reports

12.6 Review mitigation measures for preventing bycatch and entanglement

12.7 Review studies examining the implications of effort reductions on cetacean bycatch, fisheries economics and yields

12.8 Progress on previous recommendations

12.9 Biennial workplan

13. SHIP STRIKES (HIM)

13.1 Review new methods and estimates of rates of ship strikes, risk of ship strikes and mortality (including review progress on ship strike database)

13.2 Mitigation of ship strikes in high risk areas

13.2.1 Review progress towards assessing and mitigating ship strikes in previously identified high risk areas

13.2.2 Provide advice on routing measures

13.2.3 Review new research relevant to mitigation

13.3 Review methods for estimating vessel traffic for vessel types that are not equipped with AIS

13.4 Co-operation with IMO Secretariat and relevant IMO committees

13.5 Review new information regarding risks from fast ferries and support vessels for energy industries

13.6 Progress on previous recommendations

13.7 Biennial workplan

14. ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS (E)

14.1 Chemical pollution - Review progress on intersessional work and agree on priorities for Pollution 2025

14.2 Diseases of concern - Focus session on *Morbillivirus* and *Brucella*

14.3 Strandings and mortality events

14.3.1 Update on the IWC Strandings Initiative and workplan 2020-2022

14.3.2 New information on unusual mortality events (also see Item 8.3.3)

14.4 Review progress from intersessional workshop on climate change

14.5 Review progress from intersessional work on impacts to cetaceans from underwater noise

14.6 Review progress on recommendations on marine debris

14.7 SOCER report (Pacific Ocean)

14.8 Progress on previous recommendations

14.9 Biennial workplan

15. ECOSYSTEM MODELLING

- 15.1 Review results of ecosystem modelling in the Antarctic Ocean
- 15.2 Cooperation with CCAMLR and CMS on ecosystem modelling including progress from workshop(s)
 - 15.2.1 Review progress from Workshop on the Role of Cetaceans in Ecosystem Functioning: Gap Analysis
 - 15.2.2 Finalise response to Commission's request on review of contributions of cetaceans to ecosystem functioning (Resolution 2016-3)
 - 15.2.3 Planning of the future joint IWC-CCAMLR workshop(s) and possible MoU
- 15.3 Progress on multi-species distribution models (MSDMs)
- 15.4 Progress with development of individual-based energetic models (IBEMs)
- 15.5 Evaluate the energetics-based model and the relationship between $MSYR_{1+}$ and $MSYR_{mat}$ (previously considered in IST)
- 15.6 Modelling of competition among whales and relationships between whales and prey
- 15.7 Standing topics
 - 15.7.1 Progress on considering effects of long-term environmental variability on whale populations
 - 15.7.2 Review progress on evaluation of krill distribution and abundance
- 15.8 Progress on previous recommendations
- 15.9 Biennial workplan

16. SMALL CETACEANS

- 16.1 Small cetacean use as aquatic wildmeat
 - 16.1.1 Review of Workshop reports
 - 16.1.2 Progress on collaboration with CMS Aquatic Wildmeat Group
 - 16.1.3. Framework for progressing on identified issues/areas
- 16.2 Ongoing and potential CMP for small cetaceans
 - 16.2.1. Franciscana
 - 16.2.2. South American river dolphins
 - 16.2.3. Asian river dolphins
 - 16.2.4. Outcomes from IUCN *Ex Situ* meeting and relevance to SM, HIM, and CMP
- 16.3 Progress Intersessional Correspondence Groups and previous recommendations
 - 16.3.1 *Sotalia* (including joint SDDNA assessment)
 - 16.3.2. Recommendation review
 - 16.3.3. Other
- 16.4 Small Cetacean Task Team Progress
 - 16.4.1. Review of task team procedures
 - 16.4.2. South Asian River Dolphin Task Team
 - 16.4.3 Africa-focused *Sousa* Task Team
 - 16.4.4 Lahille's Dolphin Task Team
- 16.5 Review direct takes and live captures of small cetaceans
 - 16.5.1 Evaluation of previous recommendations related to direct takes
 - 16.5.2 Live captures
- 16.6 Status of the Voluntary Fund for Small Cetacean Conservation Research
 - 16.6.1 Assessment Panel recommendations for 2021-22 projects
- 16.7 Biennial workplan

17. WHALE WATCHING

- 17.1 Assess the impacts of whale watching and swim-with-whale operations on cetaceans

- 17.1.1 Studies on assessing impacts, (i) short-term; (ii) mid- to long-term; (iii) swim-with operations; (iv) Emerging areas of concern
 - 17.1.2 Progress on plans for 3rd workshop on Modelling and Assessment of Whale Watching Impacts (MAWI)
 - 17.2.3 Review responses to MAWI questionnaire
 - 17.2 Update on IWC's General Principles for Whale Watching after intersessional discussion with the Conservation Committee and Secretariat
 - 17.3 Progress with regional reviews of whale watching
 - 17.3.1 Sri Lanka
 - 17.3.2 Latin America
 - 17.3.3 Timor-Leste
 - 17.4 Collaborative work within the IWC
 - 17.4.1 Update on IWC's Whale Watching Handbook
 - 17.4.2 Work of Conservation Committee's Standing Working Group on Whale Watching
 - 17.4.3 Collaboration with other SC sub-committees on platforms of opportunity and citizen science
 - 17.5 Progress on previous recommendations
 - 17.6 Biennial workplan
18. WHALE SANCTUARIES (SAN)
- 18.1 Updates from relevant sub-committees on new information relevant to the SOS management plan
 - 18.2 New information for other sanctuaries
 - 18.3 Progress on previous recommendations
 - 18.4 Biennial workplan
19. EXTINCTION INITIATIVE
20. IWC LIST OF RECOGNISED SPECIES
21. IWC DATABASES AND CATALOGUES (PH AND GDR)
- 21.1 Guidelines for IWC catalogues and photo-ID databases (PH)
 - 21.2 Progress with existing or proposed new catalogues (PH)
 - 21.2.1 Right whale photo catalogues
 - 21.2.2 Happywhale database
 - 21.2.3 Flukebook
 - 21.2.4 Southern Hemisphere Blue Whale Catalogue (SHBWC)
 - 21.2.5 Antarctic Blue Whale Catalogue (ABWC)
 - 21.2.6 Fin whale photo catalogues
 - 21.2.7 Humpback whale photo catalogues
 - 21.2.8 Other photo-identification catalogues
 - 21.3 Progress with existing IWC databases (GDR, Secretariat)
 - 21.4 Potential future IWC databases (GDR)
22. MULTINATIONAL RESEARCH PROGRAMMES AND NATIONAL RESEARCH CRUISES THAT REQUIRE IWC ENDORSEMENT (ASI)
- 22.1 IWC-POWER and co-operation with Japan
 - 22.2 Southern Ocean Research Partnership (IWC-SORP)
 - 22.3 National cruises that require IWC oversight
 - 22.4 Workplan

23. SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE BUDGET FOR THE CURRENT AND NEXT BIENNIUM

23.1 Status of funded research, workshop proposals, data processing and computing needs

23.1.1 Funded proposals for 2021

23.1.2 Funded proposals in previous years still ongoing

23.1.3 Report on fund reallocations and contingencies for the Research Fund, Voluntary Fund for Small Cetaceans and SORP Voluntary Fund

23.2 Proposed budget for 2022-2023 developed under the Committee's guidelines

24. COMMITTEE PRIORITIES FOR THE BIENNIUM 2022-23 AND INITIAL AGENDA FOR 2022

25. WORKING METHODS OF THE COMMITTEE

25.1 Updates on Rules of Procedure and Handbook of the Scientific Committee

25.2 Reporting to the Commission and related matters

25.3 Capacity building and succession plan for Scientific Committee

25.4 Update on Data Availability requests and consideration of potential updates/clarifications

25.5 Committee involvement in the IWC recommendations database

25.6 Governance Review: Review of papers from the Working Group on Operational Effectiveness

25.7 Any other matters

25.8 Biennial workplan

26. PUBLICATIONS

27. ADOPTION OF REPORT

Annex C

List of Documents

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01. GIVENS, G.H., GEORGE, J.C., SUYDAM, R., TUDOR, B., VON DUYKE, A., PERSON, B. AND SCHEIMREIF, K. Correcting the 2019 survey abundance of Bering-Chukchi-Beaufort Seas bowhead whales for disturbance from powered skiffs. 18pp.
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09. DIALLO, S., STANILAND, I. AND COMHAFAT. Research plan for a cetacean sighting survey in coastal waters of western North Africa and proposal for capacity building project. 7pp.
10. MATSUOKA, K., KATSUMATA, T., YOSHIMURA, I., YAMAGUCHI, F., OHMUKAI, R., KONISHI, K., TAKAHASHI, M. AND HAKAMADA, T. Results of the Japanese dedicated cetacean sighting survey in the western North Pacific in autumn and winter season 2020/21. 15pp.
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04. WILLSON, A., MINTON, G., CHRISTIANSEN, F., CERCHIO, S., CHOLEWIAK, D., BALDWIN, R., COLLINS, T., MACDONALD, D., WILLSON, M.S. AND AL HARTHI, S. Oman Research Update: Preliminary survey results and update on deep water acoustic deployments. 11pp.
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06. NUNNY, L. AND SIMMONDS, M.P. Scientific literature related to marine mammals and climate change – an update. 10pp.
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02. GOVERNMENT OF JAPAN. Japan's Scientific Progress Reports on Large Cetaceans. 2pp.
03. IWC SECRETARIAT. Report on the Research Fund financial position. 9pp.
04. IWC SECRETARIAT. Update to the Scientific Committee on Co-operation with other Organisations – May 2020-May 2021. 7pp.
05. IWC SECRETARIAT. Cooperation with other organisations: compilation of reports. 13pp.
- 05rev01. IWC SECRETARIAT. Cooperation with other organisations: compilation of reports. 14pp.
06. ALLISON, C. AND BURKETT, S. Catches reported for the 2020 season. 2pp.
- 06rev01. ALLISON, C. AND BURKETT, S. Catches reported for the 2020 season. 2pp.

REPORTS FROM INTERSESSIONAL MEETINGS

SC/68C/REP/

01. Report of the Meeting of the IWC-POWER Technical Advisory Group (TAG) and 2021 Planning Meeting, virtual meeting, 9-10 November 2020. 25pp.
- 01rev01. Report of the Meeting of the IWC-POWER Technical Advisory Group (TAG) and 2021 Planning Meeting, virtual meeting, 9-10 November 2020. 25pp.
02. Report of the Workshop on the Review of the Status of the Franciscana, virtual meeting, 7-9 April 2021. 23pp.

03. Report of the IWC-CMS Workshop on the Cetacean Ecosystem Functioning, virtual meeting, 19-21 April 2021. 39pp.
04. Report of the Workshop on *Tursiops* Taxonomy, virtual meeting, 6 April 2021. 11pp.

RESEARCH PROPOSALS

SC/68C/RP/

01. Project proposal: Six-year review of the Eastern South Pacific Southern Right Whale Conservation Management Plan. 12pp.
02. Project proposal: Progressing the development and use of the IWC Ship Strikes Database. 13pp.
03. Project proposal: Compilation of the State of the Cetacean Environment Report (SOCER) for 2022. 9pp.
04. Project proposal: MEGARA 2022. 15pp.
05. Project proposal: Workshop to advance the In Depth Assessment of North Atlantic humpback whales. 11pp.
06. Project proposal: Aerial survey of southern right whales contributing to the western population off southern Australia. 10pp.
07. Project proposal: Southern Hemisphere Blue Whale Catalogue 2022. 11pp.
08. Project proposal: Identifying individual blue whales from Madagascar photographs. 8pp.
09. Project proposal: Assessing stock identity and movements of Antarctic and pygmy blue whales in the northern Mozambique Channel/southwest Indian Ocean. Plus supplementary material. 12pp.
10. Project proposal: Essential computing support to the Secretariat for IA for the In-depth assessment of Western North Pacific common minke whales. 8pp.
11. Project proposal: Analysis of satellite tag data for incorporation into the stock assessment process: an application with North Pacific humpback whales. 15pp.
12. Project proposal: IWC-POWER cruise in 2022 including associated meetings and processing. 12pp.
13. Project proposal: Passive Acoustic Monitoring of the Eastern South Pacific southern right whale, a key to improve Conservation Management Plan outputs 2022. 12pp.
14. Project proposal: Development of a GIS (meta) database on information on human activities that might have an adverse impact on southern right whales. 18pp.
15. Project proposal: Southern right whale acoustic presence detection near South Shetland Islands - Antarctic Peninsula. 15pp.
16. Project proposal: Tools to support ASHW conservation in Oman; population status and health assessments, knowledge transfer and science communication of large whale conservation activities. 14pp.
17. Project proposal: Enhancement and continuation of Passive Acoustic Monitoring for blue whales and other baleen whales off Oman. 14pp.
18. Project proposal: Ongoing SC database hosting and server management by IWC Secretariat. 9pp.
19. Project proposal: Research and monitoring of endangered Western North Pacific gray whales feeding off Sakhalin Island in 2021 and its relevance to Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling proposed by the Makah Indian Tribe in US waters. 9pp.

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