

Report from the Conservation Committee Intersessional Correspondence Group on Cetaceans and Ecosystem Functioning – 2023/2024

*Submitted by the Chair of the Intersessional Correspondence Group
on Cetaceans and Ecosystem Functioning (ICG-CEF)*

The Commission is requested to:

- *note the intersessional progress made by the Intersessional Correspondence Group on Cetaceans and Ecosystem Functioning (ICG-CEF) and endorse the report*
- *adopt the proposed workplan of the ICG for 2025-2026*
- *endorse the updated Terms of Reference*
- *support funding application for the Pilot Project (Annex 1)*

Update from the working group

Since 2016, the IWC has been considering the contributions of cetaceans to ecosystem functioning for people and natural systems, as a matter of importance (IWC, 2016). To date, the three different workshops on cetacean and ecosystem functioning have been conducted by the IWC Scientific and Conservation Committees.

At IWC68 the Commission endorsed the socio-economic workshop recommendations (CC/68/REP/SEVCEF/01) and tasked the Conservation Committee Intersessional correspondence group on cetacean and ecosystem functioning (ICG CEF) to work on the development of initial steps to advance on pilot project proposal to assess the socio-economic value of cetaceans.

During 2023, an advisory group was established, candidates' populations have been identified, and terms of reference (ToR) for pilot project have been extensively discussed. Economic experts also attended the 2023 IWC-CMS workshop on cetacean and ecosystem functioning.

Details on the process have been reported to the SC69a meeting (IWC/SC/69a/EM/02rev2 and IWC/SC/69a/EM/01rev1), with focus on species/population selection process and to the SC69b meeting (IWC/SC/69b/EM/01) as well as to the 2023 CCPG meeting, with focus on pilot project terms of references. The 2023 IWC-CMS workshop (SC/69B/REP/04) also reviewed socio-economic aspects and it was agreed on pilot project priorities and objectives to be considered on the ToR and draft tender proposal.

The draft tender proposal on pilot project was modified to reflect the latest IWC-CMS workshop agreements. Overall, the pilot project should: a) create a research framework to assess the economic role of cetaceans in supporting marine ecosystem services; b) apply some of these models (with available ecological and economic data) to a specific population/area as a general case study; and c) provide general guidelines on how these economic valuations can be used to influence whale conservation and management, either through market or policy developments.

The draft tender has been submitted to the Conservation Committee and IWC69 for its consideration. The pilot project consultancy is planned to be conducted during 2025 and its costs should not exceed £50,000. Details can be found in **Annex 1**.

Terms of References

As part of the IWC68-WGOE process, the Conservation Committee was tasked with standardizing all the SWG and ICG Terms of Reference. ToR should a) clearly defined tasks of the group, b) include how and where it should report its work, and c) in the case of ICGs, the expected duration of its existence, or the deliverables required before its dissolution.

The Intersessional Correspondence group on Cetacean and Ecosystem functioning (ICG CEF) was established in response to the Resolution 2016-3 and the 2018 Committee report (IWC, 2018). The following ToR are proposed for the Conservation Committee Intersessional Correspondence group on Cetacean and Ecosystem functioning (ICG CEF):

- a) to propose options to undertake the review on the ecological, management, environmental, social and economic components of the contribution of cetaceans to the functioning of healthy ecosystems.
- b) to propose options to further incorporate into the work of the Conservation Committee the contributions made by live cetaceans and cetacean carcasses to ecosystem functioning.
- c) The intersessional Correspondence Group will report to meetings of both the Scientific Committee and Conservation Committee on the activities related to the tasks outlined in the ICG workplan. :to provide guidance and monitor the implementation of the pilot project to assess the socio-economic value of cetaceans.
- d) The Conservation Committee will decide on the continuation of the ICG based on reported progress against these tasks and Commission objectives/priorities.

The working group on cetaceans and ecosystem functions should receive the pilot project report intersessionally and it may re-consider its ToR at IWC70 in the light of new priorities identified.

Workplan

The following workplan has been developed for the next two years (2025-2026):

- Implementation of pilot project – 2025
- Workshop to discuss pilot project results and to identify future priorities – 2026

The pilot project has funding implications. Details provided in **Annex 1**.

Project Title

Pilot project to assess the socio-economic values of cetaceans to the well-being of people and the rest of nature.

Lead Working Group

Please note which Working Group has recommended the project be taken forward.

Additionally, if other Working Groups or Subcommittees have interests in the work of this project, please list them here.

The IWC has been considering the contributions of cetaceans to ecosystem functioning for people and natural systems since 2016 and three different workshops on cetacean and ecosystem functioning have been conducted by the IWC Scientific and Conservation Committees.

At IWC68 the Commission endorsed the socio-economic workshop recommendations (CC/68/REP/SEVCEF/01) and agreed a short-term workplan to advance the development of a pilot project to assess the socio-economic values of a single (or set of) species or populations of cetaceans to the well-being of people and the rest of nature.

Lead subcommittees and working groups:

IWC Conservation Committee and its working group on Cetaceans and Ecosystem Functioning.

IWC Scientific Committee and its standing working group on ecosystem modelling.

Project Description

A very brief overview of the project proposal and its expected outcomes.

Cetaceans play an important role into the ecosystem functioning on nutrient circulation, ocean fertilization, whale falls and as predators. Since 2016, the IWC has recognized the importance of its role and in 2022 agreed to advance on pilot project to assess the socio-economic values of cetaceans to the well-being of people and the rest of nature.

The pilot project is tasked to:

- a) create a research framework to assess the economic role of cetaceans in supporting marine ecosystem services;
- b) apply some of these models (with available ecological and economic data) to a specific population/area as a general case study; and
- c) provide general guidelines on how these economic valuations can be used to influence whale conservation and management, either through market or policy developments.

The draft tender is included as Annex 1 for its consideration. The pilot project consultancy is planned to be conducted during 2025 and its costs should not exceed £50,000.

Project Justification

Demonstrate connections to relevant recommendations and Resolutions endorsed by the Commission including, where relevant, the Conservation Committee's Strategic Plan.

In 2016, the Commission adopted the resolution on Cetacean and their Contribution to Ecosystem Functioning (Resolution 2016-3). It directed the Conservation Committee to undertake inter alia the review of economic aspects related to the contributions of cetaceans to ecosystem functioning. In 2018, the Commission adopted resolution 2018-2 on advancing the Commission's work on the role of cetaceans in the ecosystem functioning.

The workshop on socio-economic value was conducted in 2022 and proposed in the short-term the development of a pilot project to assess the socio-economic value of cetaceans for their ecosystem contributions. Its recommendations were endorsed by the Commission at IWC68 and a workplan was agreed to further discuss the pilot project.

The pilot project represents a first step from the IWC to start understanding the scope and magnitude of the ecosystem services provided by cetaceans.

The Conservation Committee through its working group on Cetacean and Ecosystem Functioning established in 2023 an Advisory Group, including but not limited to experts in the ecological, biological, and economic sciences. The Advisory Group focused its efforts on (1) selection of the species that could be assessed in the pilot project, and (2) the development of Terms of Reference (ToR) to conduct this assessment through a consultancy. The second IWC-CMS workshop (SC/69B/REP/04) also considered socio-economic aspects and agreed on priorities for the pilot project.

Relevant IWC Voluntary Funds

Please list all relevant IWC Voluntary Funds and which criteria this project meets.

Voluntary Conservation Fund - Projects addressing emerging issues and new threats to whale populations

Overview of activities

Activity	Expected Results	Timeline	Budget Implications	
			Type (Salary, Travel, Meeting Services, Equipment, Other)*	Estimated Cost (GB pounds)
Call for proposals (Secretariat)	Interviews with candidates Contract consultants	October – December 2024		
Consultancy work	Contractor familiarized with consultancy approach and timeline. Identify and propose any changes to the pilot project structure.	January 2025		
Consultancy work	Completion of literature review	February 2025		
Consultancy work	Completion of identification of entities with work on Nature Based Solutions and alike	February 2025		
Consultancy work	Prepare progress report for review by the IWC Scientific Committee and Conservation Committee	April 2025		
Consultancy work	Incorporate feedback received to the progress report	May 2025		
Consultancy work	Completion of identification of research needs and development of modelling framework	May 2025		
Consultancy work	Completion of proposals for future financial mechanism and institutional arrangement	June 2025		
Consultancy work	Completion of case study economic valuations and sensitivity analyses	July 2025		
Consultancy work	Monthly meetings to update on progress	January-August 2025		

Consultancy work	Seek review from IWC community (Secretariat, Scientific and Conservation Committee experts) and other experts outside the IWC	January-August 2025		
Reporting	Project completion and final report	August 2025		
Reporting	Assist with the preparation of documents and presentation materials	August 2025		
Reporting	Report to the Scientific Committee	April-May 2026	---	---
	Report to the Conservation Committee and Commission	September-October 2026	---	---
TOTAL			Consultancy	50,000

*Salary costs should include salaries for additional staff to be recruited but exclude staff time of existing Secretariat staff (core time), which is outlined below. Travel costs should include a breakdown of flights, accommodation and subsistence. Please contact the Secretariat for guidance on subsistence rates.

Core Secretariat support required

Type	Detailed description	Number of days
IT/database	Support with virtual meetings	10
Communications	Promotion of pilot project at IWC web portal	2
Project management	Send invitations, contract arrangements, submission of documents to IWC portal	10
Other		
Total		22

Potential partners or funders

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

All the process has been supported by representatives from governments, scientific institutions, NGOs, universities and economic institutions.

Project requirements/Permits/Insurances

Please list any constraints or other considerations e.g. field work permits, CITES permits, welfare concerns, security considerations etc

Please confirm that all relevant insurances are secured.

✓ Not applicable

Possible Risks

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

✓ Not applicable

Annex 1

Invitation to Tender:

Contracted Expert Team/Organization to conduct the pilot project to assess the socioeconomic value of the ecosystem services provided by cetaceans

Background

The International Whaling Commission (IWC) is an intergovernmental organisation established under the 1946 International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling. The Commission has a membership of 88 Contracting Governments, and it meets in plenary every two years.

In 2016, the Commission adopted the resolution on Cetaceans and their Contribution to Ecosystem Functioning (Resolution 2016-3). It directed the Conservation Committee to undertake the review of ecological, management, environmental, social and economic aspects related to the contributions of cetaceans to ecosystem functioning to people and natural systems, as a matter of importance.

The IWC addresses the role of cetaceans in the ecosystem functioning through its Scientific and Conservation Committees. To date, three workshops have been conducted. Two jointly led by the IWC Scientific Committee and the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) during 2021 and 2023 on cetaceans and ecosystem functioning (SC/68C/REP/03; SC/69B/REP/04) that reviewed concepts on nutrient circulation, ocean fertilization, whale falls and cetaceans as predators, as well as modelling approaches. The other workshop was led by the IWC Conservation Committee during 2022 and reviewed the socio-economic values of the contribution of cetaceans to the ecosystem functioning (CC/68/REP/SEVCEF/01).

At its 68th biennial meeting, the Commission agreed a short-term workplan to advance the development of a pilot project to assess the socio-economic values of a single (or set of) species or populations of cetaceans to the well-being of people and the rest of nature.

About the socio-economic pilot project

The pilot project represents a first step from the IWC to start understanding the scope and magnitude of the ecosystem services provided by cetaceans.

The Conservation Committee through its working group on Cetacean and Ecosystem Functioning, established in 2023 an Advisory Group, including but not limited to experts in the ecological, biological, and economic sciences. The Advisory Group focused its efforts on (1) selection of the species that could be assessed in the pilot project, and (2) the development of Terms of Reference (ToR) to conduct this assessment through a consultancy. The second IWC-CMS workshop (SC/69B/REP/04) also considered socio-economic aspects and agreed on priorities for the pilot project.

The pilot project is not intended to assess the full value of any target species/populations, or assemblage of species, rather it is intended to provide a representation of which ecosystem functions could provide specific ecosystem services and how any specific ecosystem service value can be assessed.

The series of IWC workshops have identified different traits that are used to model ecosystem functions and services (SC/68C/REP/03, SC/69B/REP/04, CC/68/REP/SEVCEF/01). The Contracted Team/Organization will consider the potential use of these functions to be linked to any ecosystem service.

After broad consultation with experts, a list of species/population(s) with suitable information on ecosystem functioning and agreed abundance estimates were compiled by IWC and the advisory group (IWC/SC/69a/EM/02rev2). The species/populations proposed as the target(s) for the pilot project are the North Pacific humpback whale; the Southern Ocean whale species assemblage (humpback, blue, fin and minke whales); the Southwest Atlantic southern right whales; and the North Atlantic minke whale.

Notwithstanding the value of other ecosystem services (cultural, recreational, etc.), IWC resolutions (2016-3; 2018-2) were aimed at understanding the contributions of cetaceans to the ecosystem functioning. Therefore, the main work of the consultancy should focus on the ecosystem services related to the role of cetaceans in the ecosystem functioning.

Although the pilot project will inform about the values of ecosystem services provided by cetaceans to the public, the main target audience of the pilot project will be ultimately IWC contracting governments and policy makers.

This invitation to tender seeks to identify a Contracted Team/Organization that will develop the pilot project and provide advice on future developments to policy makers.

Application Process

This invitation seeks a qualified team of experts/organization to undertake the pilot project.

Responses to this Invitation to Tender should provide:

- A description of each expert's background and experience (or staff in the case of organizations), with evidence of how they meet the requirements in the *Contracted Team/Organization Specifications* section.
- A brief concept note of no more than 800 words describing the experts' conceptual understanding of the project's objectives and the foreseen methodology/ies and approaches to be applied in meeting these objectives.
- The total cost to undertake the work, including a cost breakdown of each item in the *Scope of Work* section, estimated number of days and associated daily rates.
- Confirmation that the timescales for completing the work can be met, as outlined in the *Scope of Work* and/or any amendments needed.
- Confirmation that the Contracted Team/Organization will be available to have regular meetings with the IWC Secretariat and representatives from the Conservation Committee working group on Cetacean and Ecosystem Functioning.
- Confirmation that the Contracted Team/Organization will be available, if requested by the Conservation Committee working group on Cetacean and Ecosystem Functioning, to attend part of the Commission, Conservation Committee and/or Scientific Committee meetings.

Applications will be accepted until **[INSERT DATE]** and should be sent via e-mail with the subject "Tender Application – Pilot Project Socioeconomic Values of Cetacean Ecosystem Services" to: secretariat@iwc.int

All responses will be acknowledged.

Contracted Team/Organization Specifications

The following academic and experience requirements should be met by the team of experts or staff in the case of organization:

- Documented experience in a field related to environmental/ecological economics, a MSc and/or a PhD in any of these disciplines will be highly desired.
- At least 5 years of experience in conducting ecosystem services analyses, including market and non-market methods.
- At least 5 years in designing financial mechanisms based on the economic value of natural capital.
- Good knowledge related to the contributions of marine biodiversity, particularly cetaceans, to the ecosystem functioning and their associated ecosystem services. Experience in management of marine resources and policy development would be an asset.

- Excellent and demonstrable interpersonal skills, with an ability to engage and work with a variety of stakeholders, particularly from ecological and economical fields as well as managers and policy makers.
- At least one of the experts should be fluent in spoken and written English.

Evaluation of Applications

Applications will be evaluated against the criteria outlined in the *Contracted Team/Organization Specifications* and followed by interviews for shortlisted applicants (via Zoom). The selection of applicants will be carried out by members of the IWC Conservation Committee working group on Cetacean and Ecosystem Functioning and the IWC Secretariat.

The successful applicant(s) will be notified by [INSERT DATE]. The contract is expected to be signed in January 2025 and work should be completed within eight months after the contract is signed.

Scope of work

The Contracted Team/Organization will work closely with the IWC Secretariat, the IWC Conservation Committee working group on Cetacean and Ecosystem Functioning and experts from the IWC Scientific Committee Standing Working Group on Ecosystem Modelling.

The pilot project should aim to:

- a) create a research framework to assess the economic role of cetaceans in supporting marine ecosystem services;
- b) apply some of these models (with available ecological and economic data) to a specific population/area as a general case study and;
- c) provide general guidelines on how these economic valuations can be used to influence whale conservation and management, either through market or policy developments.

In support of these goals, the Contracted Team/Organization should also consider to:

- conduct a literature review on economic aspects related to valuation of ecosystem services and their applicability to cetaceans and their role in ecosystem functioning¹, with a focus on species selected for the study (if data allows it).
- identify species' services where a connection between supporting services and economic data can be provided.
- identify research needs to establish links from ecosystem functions to ecosystem services where it is not possible to appropriately link them.
- develop a modelling framework that could guide future research work to assess other ecosystem services from cetaceans.

identify international and regional governmental organisations and entities across the UN and non-UN with work on Nature Based Solutions or any other similar approach such as Blue Carbon.

- explore and propose alternatives for a future financial mechanism and governance schemes to improve the conservation and restoration of cetacean species.
- assist with the preparation of documents and presentation materials (PPTs and the like) on the pilot project outcomes for the Scientific Committee, Conservation Committee and Commission meetings and website.
- report and present of results (see details under *Reporting*).

When applying any model to target(s) population(s) as general case study (goal b), it has been proposed, whenever possible, to:

- provide accurate estimates of economical valuation (including a sensitivity analysis) for the identified ecosystem services that are feasible to assess (*i.e* climate regulation through carbon sequestration within biomass, including body and carcasses)

- provide broader economic valuation estimates, using different scenarios, for those ecosystem services that may have less data and modelling available (for example: carbon sequestration through primary productivity and/or fisheries increases due to nutrient cycling) on the selected species or assemblage of species (e.g Southern Ocean) that may have sufficient information.
- clearly differentiate between methodologies and provide insights on their limitations.
- compare the economic valuation of target(s) population(s) between current population size and pre-exploitation population size, whenever possible.

Working Methods

This work will be conducted through a combination of i) desktop review of relevant materials, including *inter alia* the Commission' information; ii) liaison with ecological and economical experts from within and outside the IWC and; iii) liaison with experts from the IWC Scientific Committee Standing Working Group on Ecosystem Modelling and the IWC Conservation Committee working group on Cetacean and Ecosystem Functioning, as well as any other interested party in the IWC community.

The Contracted Team/Organization will inform the Secretariat before contacting external stakeholders.

Support to Contracted Team/Organization

The Secretariat will assist to ensure all required documents are available and will establish contact between the Contracted Team/Organization and key stakeholders in the IWC community.

The Secretariat will provide guidance on an ongoing basis, as required. The Contracted Team/Organization will be able to draw on the expertise of the IWC Conservation Committee working group on Cetacean and Ecosystem Functioning and IWC Scientific Committee Standing Working Group on Ecosystem Modelling.

Reporting

During the consultancy, at least monthly meetings will be held (remotely) between representatives of the IWC Conservation Committee working group on Cetaceans and Ecosystem Functioning, the IWC Secretariat and the Contractor Team/Organization to monitor progress, answer questions and (if necessary) make appropriate arrangements.

The Contractor Team/Organization will provide a progress report to the IWC Conservation Committee working group on Cetaceans and Ecosystem Functioning after 3 months of signing the contract.

A final report will be required upon completion of the work, after 8 months of signing the contract, as well as any necessary document/presentation materials (graphs, PPT, etc.) to inform the IWC Commission and its Scientific and Conservation Committee.

Representative(s) from the Contracted Team/Organization may be requested to attend next IWC biennial meeting, Scientific or Conservation Committee meetings, for a limited period of time, to present outcomes of the pilot project.

Work schedule

The work will commence by **January 2025**. Upon commencement of the contract, the Contracted Team/Organization and the IWC Secretariat will agree a detailed work schedule, which will include the following milestones:

Task	Completion date (INSERT DATE)
Contractor familiarized with consultancy approach and timeline. Identify and propose any changes needed to the proposed pilot project structure.	Week 1
Completion of literature review	Month 1
Completion of identification of entities with work on Nature Based Solutions and alike	Month 1
Prepare progress report for review by the IWC Scientific Committee and Conservation Committee	Month 3
Incorporate feedback received to the progress report	Month 4
Completion of identification of research needs and development of modelling framework	Month 6
Completion of proposals for future financial mechanism and institutional arrangement	Month 7
Completion of case study economic valuations and sensitivity analyses	Month 8
Monthly meetings to update on progress	Ongoing throughout project
Seek review from IWC community (Secretariat, Scientific and Conservation Committee experts) and other experts outside the IWC	Ongoing throughout project
Project completion and final report	Month 8
Assist with the preparation of documents and presentation materials	Month 8
Attend (virtually or in person) proposed meeting(s)	To be defined

Budget

The maximum budget available for tasks detailed in the *Scope of Work* above is £50,000. The contract will be paid over three payments: 25% upon signing of the contract, 25% after reception of progress report and 50% after completion of the project and deliverable of project final report and supporting materials.

If requested by the IWC Conservation Committee working group on Cetacean and Ecosystem Functioning, costs of the participation of contracted expert representative(s) to attend meetings of the Commission, Scientific or Conservation Committee will be covered separately.