

Annex O

Recommendations on Management Issues Arising out of the Right Whale Workshop

The Committee endorsed the Workshop recommendations that require management action. These measures attempt to reduce or eliminate non-natural mortality of right whales and disturbance to their habitat. These are particularly important for those stocks for which the Committee has expressed concern over their status.

Mortality

The Workshop had identified ship strikes and incidental entanglements in fishing gear as the most significant cause of human-induced mortality of right whales.

With respect to ship strikes (see SC/50/Rep4, item 12.3.3), given the serious concern over the status of western North Atlantic right whales (see SC/50/Rep4, item 11), the Committee **strongly recommends** that the Commission makes every effort to encourage the adoption by relevant governments of the specific recommendations for this area given in Appendix I.

In more general terms the Committee **recommends** that the Commission:

- (1) urges its member nations to
 - (a) initiate or expand preventative measures including Notices to Mariners, notifications on charts and informational brochures to other areas where right whales and high levels of shipping overlap, and
 - (b) develop mitigating options, areas to be avoided, early warning systems, sonar detection of whales, acoustic deterrents, and the shifting of shipping lanes and reductions in ship speed;
- (2) seek cooperation from the International Maritime Organisation to provide protection for right whales, including but not limited to mandatory ship reporting and ship routing, especially where commercial vessels are entering calving, breeding or feeding areas.

With respect to entanglements (see SC/50/Rep4, item 12.3.2), the Committee **recommends** the Commission urges member governments to ensure that:

- (1) research continues on methods to reduce right whale entanglements in fishing gear;
- (2) entanglement rates and the success of steps to reduce entanglement are determined and monitored (e.g. through periodic analysis of scarring rates and levels of severe entanglement in photo-identification databases);
- (3) if the above monitoring indicates that protective measures are insufficient, they are upgraded as appropriate;
- (4) disentanglement programmes (including training from experienced persons) are established where appropriate;

- (5) consideration is given to the prohibition of any gear that might entangle right whales in high use habitats, and especially in calving, breeding or feeding areas and sanctuaries.

Disturbance and habitat issues

The Committee **recommends** that the Commission urges local, regional and national authorities responsible for right whale habitat to develop contingency plans for oil and chemical spills, where these do not exist (see SC/50/Rep4, item 12.3.1).

The Workshop had also made specific recommendations on habitat related issues that require management action by individual governments (see SC/50/Rep4, item 12.3.5). The Committee **recommends** that the Commission ask the relevant governments to take the necessary action as follows.

- (1) *Gull harassment*: Kelp gull harassment of right whales off Peninsula Valdés, Argentina (Rowntree *et al.*, 1998a; b) has grown substantially worse in parallel with increasing areas of open waste disposal sites and a concomitant growth in gull populations. Avoidance reactions of the whales significantly impact their behaviour and perhaps their distribution (Rowntree *et al.*, 1998b). The Committee **recommends** that these disposal sites be aggressively regulated.
- (2) *Monitoring human activities*: Recognising that the entire known breeding population of New Zealand sub-Antarctic southern right whale concentrates in a very small area, and that adverse effects of human-related activities could potentially have a serious impact on this recovering population, the Committee **recommends** that any existing or proposed human-related activities in the New Zealand sub-Antarctic (e.g. whalewatching, oil or gas exploration, vessel traffic and fishing operations) be carefully evaluated and monitored for any potential negative effects.

Facilitation of research

The Committee **recommends** that the Commission urges member governments to provide funding for the research items it has identified (see SC/50/Rep4, item 15). In addition the Committee draws attention to the following **recommendations** that require action but not funding *per se*.

Sample collection

The Workshop had made a number of research recommendations with respect to the collection of biopsy samples. The Committee **recommends** that the Commission

urges member governments to facilitate the issue of national permits to collect sufficient biopsy samples from adult and calf right whales to address the research recommendations identified in SC/50/Rep4 (items 7 and 9).

Sample transfer

The Workshop **recommends** that IWC member nations should be asked to facilitate transfer of skin/blubber biopsy samples between research institutions in different countries to assist collaborative analyses, and that the IWC Secretariat approaches the CITES Secretariat to determine the best way to facilitate the exchange of such material.

Necropsies

The Workshop had noted the need for detailed necropsies of right whales, particularly for those populations for which there is concern over their status. The Committee **recommends** that the Commission requests that member governments ensure that appropriate programmes are initiated and, where necessary, permits granted to enable this work to take place (see SC/50/Rep4, item 9.1.3).

Surveys in territorial waters

The Workshop had identified the need for a further research cruise to assess the abundance of right whales in the western North Pacific. The Committee **recommends** that the

Committee requests the Commission to urge relevant member nations to co-operate in this exercise and in particular that the Russian Federation is urged to grant permission for vessels to survey within 12 n.miles of Okhotsk Sea coast (see item 10.2).

Whalewatching

The Workshop had endorsed the IWC's general principles for whalewatching (IWC, 1997, p.105). The Committee **recommends** that these be applied to all whalewatching activities involving right whales. It was agreed that it was critical to: (1) manage the development of new and fledgling whalewatching operations to minimise the risk of adverse affects; and (2) take appropriate regulatory measures in areas where directed research demonstrates negative impacts on whales from established whalewatching activities.

Special protected areas

The Workshop had agreed that special protected areas provide a framework for the implementation of site-specific regulations for whalewatching and that such areas are important in conserving coastal habitats. The Committee therefore **recommends** that studies be undertaken to assess the need for the establishment of special protected areas in areas of known right whale concentration (e.g. the central-south coast of Santa Catarina, Brazil).

Appendix 1

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REDUCING SHIP STRIKES (SEE ITEM 12.3.3 AND ITEM 14 OF SC/50/REP4)

1. Western North Atlantic

Southeast USA

Calving right whales give birth and over-winter in the coastal waters between Savannah, Georgia (GA) and West Palm Beach, Florida (FL). The primary aggregation occurs along 80 n.miles of coastline between Sapelo Island, GA and St Augustine, FL. Most sightings of right whales occur west of 81°00'W (Knowlton *et al.*, 1992; Slay *et al.*, 1998). Three major shipping channels serve three commercial ports and two military bases located within this area of aggregation. These are the Brunswick Harbor entrance (Brunswick, GA), the St Marys River entrance (Fernandina Beach, FL) and the St. Johns River entrance (Jacksonville, FL).

The Committee **recommends** that these three channels be extended due east, from their respective sea-buoys, to 81°00'W. During the calving season (December to March), all vessels greater than 25m in length, using these channels, should travel the entire length of the channels. All vessels greater than 25m in length should operate at less than 10 knots (or minimum safe steerage) while in the federally designated critical habitat. The Committee further **recommends** that a mandatory ship reporting system be implemented to acquire information on the numbers of vessels transiting this area.

Bay of Fundy

Right whales are present in the Bay of Fundy from June to November, with a peak in August and September. In recent years, mother-calf pairs, juveniles and adults identified in the Bay represent some two-thirds of the catalogued population. The aggregation of right whales overlaps with the outbound

shipping lane from Saint John, New Brunswick, and the inbound vessels lane for ports in Maine and New Brunswick. These lanes are monitored by a Vessel Traffic System. Since 1992, there have been three mortalities from ship collisions in the Bay of Fundy (Slay *et al.*, 1998).

To reduce the potential for ship/whale collisions, the Committee **recommends** that the shipping lanes be narrowed and moved about 10km to the east away from right whale aggregations.

Roseway Basin

Roseway Basin is an offshore feeding habitat which has been observed with high numbers of right whales from July to September. Although no shipping lanes transit the area and no mortalities have been documented, ship traffic has been observed transiting this habitat.

The Committee **recommends** that this high-use area be designated as an area to be avoided by shipping.

Great South Channel

Right whales are present in high numbers in this offshore area from April to June. Shipping traffic to/from Boston Harbor use the shipping lanes in the Great South Channel. Other Gulf of Maine shipping traffic traverses the entire breadth of the Great South Channel. Little is known about the level of ship traffic and how it overlaps with right whale habitat use.

The Committee **recommends** that a mandatory ship reporting system be implemented to acquire information on the numbers of vessels transiting this area and to provide

these ships with information and information on real time sighting locations obtained of right whales observed from aerial surveys.

Cape Cod Bay

Right whales are present in limited numbers in this area from December to May. An unknown level of vessel traffic transits through this high-use area.

The Committee **recommends** that a mandatory ship reporting system be implemented to acquire information on the numbers of vessels transiting this area and to provide these vessels with information on right whale sighting locations obtained from aerial and shipboard surveys.

High speed ferries

The Workshop expressed serious concern over the proposed use of large (>100') high speed (>30 knots) ferries transiting right whale migration corridors and habitat. The Committee **recommends** consideration of ship/whale collision risks in permit review.

2. Other areas

The Committee agreed that many of the problems faced by North Atlantic right whales with regard to ship traffic either currently or potentially exist in other parts of the world where right whales concentrate.

For areas where there is information on right whale distribution and densities, or critical habitats have been defined, the control of shipping activity should be investigated. This may include:

- (a) moving shipping lanes to areas of lower right whale densities;
- (b) slowing ship speeds;
- (c) educating mariners on right whale distribution and vulnerability;
- (d) assessing regions where there is increased potential for whale/ship interaction with increasing or expanding right whale populations.

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