

Annex S

Intersessional Review Group and *Ad hoc* Working Group Comments on Research Proposals (Agenda Item 17.2)

Members: Zeh (Convenor), Kato, Martin, Walløe.

Seven research proposals requesting funding were submitted, of which one was withdrawn and another was considered by the Other Great Whales sub-committee as part of its work (Annex E, item 6.2). The review group considered the remaining five proposals, along with comments from outside reviewers for each. A letter received in connection with SC/50/RP3 requested blue whale biopsy samples for analysis.

Evaluation of the proposals used the criteria and followed the recommendations given in IWC (1996). Scores were assigned to each research proposal on each of the seven criteria of IWC (1996). The group's summary comments on each proposal are given below.

SC/50/RP1: Development of a stock identification system for cetaceans based on trace element signatures in teeth or baleen. P. Outridge and D. Gregoire. \$63,000 Canadian.

This is a proposal to develop a geographically-based stock identification system for cetacean species, based on the natural trace element or isotopic signature in their teeth or baleen. The outside reviewers considered the proposers qualified and the proposed approach sound. However, comments from one of the outside reviewers provide a good summary of the views of the intersessional review group. The authors of the proposal have no clear particular hypothesis to be tested and no idea concerning what cetacean they might consider. They did not demonstrate an awareness of problems for their technique that might be posed by migratory animals or an understanding of the need to understand the geographic distribution of the trace elements they might use in order to interpret results. The review group assigned an overall score of **Low** to the proposal.

SC/50/RP2: Abundance and stock identity of humpback whales (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) in New Caledonia, South Pacific. C. Garrigue, J. Greaves and C.S. Baker. \$29,000 US 1998, \$27,400 US 1999.

This proposal requested funding to collect photographs and biopsy samples of humpback whales in New Caledonia and use them to estimate population size, migratory patterns, and stock identity for this population. The outside reviews pointed out some weaknesses in study design and questioned the need for more samples in this location, given that a number are already available. The group assigned a **Low to Medium** overall score to the proposal.

SC/50/RP3: Delineation of breeding stocks of the blue whale (*Balaenoptera musculus*). B. May and C. Conway. \$7,225 US Year 1, \$8,670 US Year 2.

This is a request for funds to examine worldwide blue whale stock structure using introns of conserved nuclear genes. The outside reviewers were positive about the proposed approach and methods but questioned whether the proposers had or could obtain sufficient samples, and whether the approach would provide more answers than genetic approaches presently being used on blue whale samples. The group assigned an overall score of **Medium**.

SC/50/RP5: Retrospective analysis and method development for integrated analysis of the SOWER2000 survey. D. Borchers, S. Reilly and P. Hammond. £32,641.

This is a request for funds to develop methods for relating distribution, abundance and biomass of baleen whales to krill and apply these methods to existing data sets. Both the internal and outside reviewers had some questions about the clarity of objectives and proposed methods, but the proposers provided a thoughtful response to these questions. It was agreed that the relevance of the proposed research to current Scientific Committee priorities was high. The group assigned an overall score of **High**.

SC/50/RP6: Baseline photo-identification and genetic sampling of humpback whales off Moorea, French Polynesia. J. Darling and L. Gerber. \$10,000 US, but only \$5,000 US requested from IWC.

This is a request for funds to sample humpbacks in a breeding area in the South Pacific where existing data are limited. The biopsy samples might help to elucidate stock structure in the Southern Hemisphere, so the proposal does address a Scientific Committee need, and reviewers were generally positive about the competence of the proposers, the feasibility of the work and the chances of success. The group assigned an overall score of **Medium to High**.

The priority rankings of the review group are implicit in the overall scores assigned. The group strongly supported the funding of SC/50/RP5, discouraged funding of SC/50/RP1 and considered the remaining three proposals worthy of support if ample funds were available after accounting for other needs and priorities identified by the Scientific Committee.

REFERENCE

- International Whaling Commission. 1996. Report of the Scientific Committee, Annex S. Review of IWC Scientific Committee Procedures for Assessing Research Proposals-Report of Intersessional Correspondence Group. *Rep. int. Whal. Comm* 46:227-8.