

Report of the Meeting of the Management Sub-Committee on Inspection and Observation

Copenhagen, Denmark, 27 January 2005

The Management Sub-Committee on Inspection and Observation met in the Office of the Faroe Islands representation in Copenhagen, 27 January 2005 from 11:00 – 13:00. Present were Egil Ole Øen, chair, (Norway), Jústines Olsen (Faroe Islands), Kristjan Loftsson (Iceland), Ole Heinrich and Mads Lillelund (Greenland) and Charlotte Winsnes from the Secretariat.

1. & 2. Adoption of the Agenda and Appointment of Rapporteur

The agenda was adopted with the addition of a new item 4: Election of officers. Charlotte Winsnes was appointed as rapporteur.

3. The 2004 season

The report from the Secretariat of the 2004 season was contained in document NAMMCO I&O-2005-2.

Charlotte Winsnes gave a brief presentation of the 2004 observation season, drawing special attention to the following points:

- it has proven beneficial to focus on one region per year;
- in Greenland the observer's opportunities to observe the actual hunting activities are limited due to the hunt's opportunistic character.

The Sub-Committee took note of the report from the Secretariat.

4. Review of the Observation Scheme

At its last meeting in January 2004 the Sub-Committee asked the Secretariat to review and recommend improvements to the implementation of the Observation Scheme. The evaluation should only consider the implementation process and not the actual text of the Provisions and the Guidelines. The Management Committee at its meeting in March 2004 endorsed this recommendation from the Sub-Committee. The Secretariat's review was contained in document NAMMCO I&O-2005-03.

The Scheme came into force in 1998 and hence has been operative for seven seasons. NAMMCO has had observers in Greenland, the Faroe Islands and Norway. With the exception of 1998 when no observer was sent to the Faroe Islands, observers have been placed in all member countries engaged in hunting activities up until 2003 (the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Norway). In 2003 observations were conducted in Norway only, in 2004 the focus was on Greenland alone.

Observations were land-based until 2001, but have since then also been conducted at sea. In Norway observers have been placed on board vessels for periods of up to several weeks, and in Greenland observers have been out at sea for a day both onboard hunting vessels and in a rented boat observing the hunt from a distance.

No violations of national or hunting related regulations have occurred during the period the observation scheme has been in operation.

Some characteristics of the hunts having an impact on the implementation of the observation scheme in Greenland, the Faroe Islands and Norway were outlined.

In relation to the Norwegian minke whale hunt, factors such as the number of vessels, quotas, the hunting areas a certain vessel will operate in and the time periods of the hunt are all defined when the hunting season begins. The whaling fleet in Norway consists of small fishing vessels. However when the vessels are rigged for the whaling season, fishing is not permitted. The main concerns with respect to the implementation of the Scheme are therefore to identify the vessels

that can accommodate an observer, and to decide on an area and time period that potentially will result in the highest number of observations.

In the Faroe Islands the pilot whale hunt is opportunistic. Schools of pilot whales may arrive all year round, although historically (1584 – 1999) the period July – September has accounted for 67 % of the hunts. The driving and killing of pilot whales may only take place at the 24 authorised whaling bays, the hunt is not quota regulated and everybody may participate. From the point of view of the implementation of the observer scheme the main concern is to pick the “right” observation period. When the observer is stationed in the Faroe Islands it is important to have good communication with the “Sysselman” and to have a means of transportation in order to get to the whaling bay where a drive is ongoing.

The hunting of marine mammals in Greenland is opportunistic. Sealing takes place all year round, with the exception of adult and breeding harbour seals in the period 01.10-30.04. Seals are hunted on an individual basis from dinghies and from the ice. Whaling is conducted all year round except for minke whales, which can only be hunted in the period 01.04-31.12. Quotas exist on minke- and fin whales, belugas and narwhals. With respect to minke and fin whaling, most boats are fishing boats, which are also licensed for whaling. If a whale is spotted while the vessel is fishing, the captain may elect to cease fishing and go after the whale if this is believed to be the most lucrative option. The joint rifle hunts are by nature more organised in the sense that if the weather conditions are good the parties to the hunt will go out primarily with the aim of hunting whales.

By far the most decisive and uncontrollable factor influencing the hunting of marine mammals in all member countries is the weather. Other important factors to consider in Greenland are market conditions, *i.e.* the possibility of getting the products from the hunt sold, and hunting seasons for terrestrial mammals such as reindeer, musk ox and birds as most hunters participate in all the different hunts.

The Sub-Committee emphasised the following general comments and points for improvement:

- Conducting the Observation Scheme is particularly difficult in Greenland due to the unorganized, scattered and unpredictable nature of most hunting activities. Although very different by nature, the hunting activities are more easily accessible in Norway and the Faroe Islands as compared to Greenland.
- In the Norwegian minke whale hunt, especially after the planned introduction of the “Blue Box” system¹, the main challenges for the implementation of the scheme will be to make a

¹ Øen informed the Committee of the ongoing work with the “Blue Box” system in the meeting of the Committee on Hunting Methods just prior to this meeting.

Briefly sketched, the Blue Box is a trip recorder, a tamper-proof automated computing system designed to independently monitor and log the activities associated with data on certain events on board provided by different sensors, including independent GPS, shock transducers, strain transducers, heel sensors located in different places on a vessel that independently or in sum indicate or proves that a whale is shot and taken on board. The system is configured and calibrated for each individual vessel. The system is automated with programs designed for the continuous operation and logging of data for minimum 4 months with backup batteries and automatically restarting function following system interruption. The mandatory logbook is an important part of the overall system. Prototypes have been tested for three seasons and during the 2004 season 13 out of 34 whaling vessels were equipped with the “Blue Box”. Based on the data and results from the 2004 season, the system has been upgraded, and for the 2005 season the plan is to install a “Blue Box” on all whaling vessels. National inspectors will still be present on some boats in 2005 to monitor its function and from 2006 it is anticipated that the system will be fully operational, and national inspectors will only make random inspections on board vessels.

Implementation of the “Blue Box” system will ease some of the unnecessary and unintended restrictions of the current monitoring system. It provides a lower cost alternative bringing the hunt back to the traditional opportunistic “good weather” hunt and still secure that the harvest fit within long-term resource

decision as to which time period and area the observers should work in. The introduction of the “Blue-Box” system will make the hunt more opportunistic and less predictable because the hunting season will be longer. With sealing the main difficulty is the time period needed in order to have an observer on board a vessel. The observer in question will have to be away from her/his job for a period of six to eight weeks.

- In the Faroe Islands the main challenge will be to decide on the observation period.
- In Greenland, hunting takes place more or less throughout the whole year, but in an unpredictable fashion. To observe the actual killing of the animal may be difficult without interrupting the hunt itself. The documents “fritidsjagtbevis” (spare time hunter) and “ervervsjagtbevis” (full time hunter) must be carried by all hunters and these can be checked via land based observations.
- When assessing the success of the observation scheme it is important to remember that it is not necessarily a high number of actual hunting observations during a period that makes the scheme successful, although this is desirable, but the fact that an observer is present and able to conduct his or her job without interference of any sort.
- *Nomination process:* The member countries were urged to follow the prescribed procedures governing nomination and appointment of observers, and also to nominate more than one observer candidate. It was emphasised that the Scheme allows for nominations of observers from countries outside of NAMMCO. In such a case the nominating country is obliged to cover the possible extra expenses incurred due to for instance longer travel. Reference was also made to article B.2.8 in the Provisions noting that in exceptional circumstances an observer may observe in the country of which he or she is resident. The procedures governing the nomination and appointment of observers are somewhat time-consuming and bureaucratic. It is nevertheless very important that these procedures are followed as they secure the legitimacy of the Scheme and also guarantee transparency of the system.
- *The language and cultural barrier:* The Scheme stipulates that the observer should not come from the country in which he/she is conducting observations. This has proven to be a special challenge with respect to observations in Greenland. Most foreigners do not speak or understand Greenlandic, and a majority of the hunters in Greenland do not speak English and may not have a good understanding of a Nordic language. The implication of this is that the observer should be accompanied by an interpreter or the national “jagtbetjent”. To be able to communicate well is of the outmost importance when being on board a hunting vessel due to safety reasons. The same problem arises to a certain extent with observations out at sea in Norway. Although Norwegian and Danish are similar languages, mutual understanding may still be difficult. Another aspect of the observation scheme is the cultural differences between the observers and the observed. This is not necessarily a problem, but it is an element of the Scheme that should be kept in mind.
- *Information flow to the Secretariat:* To have updated information on hunting statistics, time frames, quotas, the most optimum areas of observation, names of contact persons *etc.* available to the Secretariat is very important for the smooth running of the observation scheme. By focusing on one region at a time the Secretariat has gained valuable information on how the different hunts are being organised in the different countries. It was recommended that this practice should be continued.
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- *Training of observers:* With the exception of the courses held in Norway for inspectors in connection with sealing and, up until now, whaling, there exist no organised training courses for observers. It is the Secretariat’s responsibility to ensure that every observer has all the relevant documentation regarding regulations and laws governing marine mammal hunting in

conservation targets and sustainable goals. It takes no space, it does not sleep, eat, and does not socialise with anyone. The system probably saves cost of an estimated 6 million NOK every year.

the respective countries and the Provisions of the Joint NAMMCO Control Scheme. As part of the preparation the Secretariat has made a practice of arranging a meeting at the outset of the observation period between the observer and relevant persons in the country in question to discuss the national regulations and laws and other connected matters.

- *Duration of the observation period:* Especially with respect to observations of sealing in Norway, it was acknowledged that it might be a problem to find observers who can actually be away for such a long period of time as is required. The vessels are out at sea for 6 – 8 weeks. Most observers have jobs and cannot easily be absent for two months with relatively short notice. The sealing fleet leaves Norway around the middle of March, which means that the observer in question will have a maximum of two months but more likely one month to arrange his leave from work *etc.* A possible solution might be to nominate observers two years in advance.
- *Budget:* The budget of NOK 200 000 will never allow for more than partial coverage. In order to observe all marine mammal hunting activities throughout the whole season the budget would have to be much higher.

In conclusion under this agenda item the Sub-Committee agreed that the implementation of the Inspection and Observation Scheme seems to be functioning well, given the human and financial resources at hand. Some administrative challenges still exist, mainly related to the process of nominating and appointing observers, but the overall impression is that the observers are able to carry out their job when they are out in the field. The importance of having observer candidates skilled in languages and with an understanding of the situation, to which she or he will be exposed, *i.e.* long periods of waiting in unfamiliar surroundings, was emphasised.

4. Election of Officers

The Committee agreed that Greenland should hold the position as Chair of the Committee (name will be forthcoming) and Justines Olsen (the Faroe Islands) was elected as Vice-Chair, both positions for the next two years (2005/2006). The Committee expressed its thanks to the outgoing Chair Egil Ole Øen (Norway) for his able chairmanship both in this Sub-Committee and in its predecessor.

5. Adoption of the Report

The final report of the meeting was approved by correspondence on 22 February 2005.