



Press Release – 13 September 2012

20 YEARS OF NAMMCO AND THE FUTURE

The North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission held its 21st annual Council meeting from 11-13 September 2012, in Svolvær, Lofoten Islands, Norway. The member countries of NAMMCO, the Faroe Islands, Greenland, Iceland and Norway again confirmed their commitment to ensuring the sustainable utilisation of marine mammals through active regional cooperation and science-based management decisions.

The Governments of Canada, Denmark, Japan and the Russian Federation are represented by observers at meetings of NAMMCO, as well as other international governmental organizations within the fields of fisheries and whaling.

For the first time, a Ministerial Meeting was held immediately prior to the Council meeting on 10th September to discuss the future of NAMMCO after 20 years of existence. In the light of the discussions taking place at the meeting it was decided by the NAMMCO Council to form a working group to look at the possibilities of organising an international event in 2014 where the use of marine mammal products will be examined in the context of global food security. The Ministers concluded that NAMMCO is a fully fledged international organisation well prepared for future challenges.

The keynote speaker at the Council meeting, Professor Richard Caddell of the Department of Law, Swansea University in Wales, United Kingdom, addressed the future challenges and opportunities for NAMMCO, and through his intervention confirmed the status of NAMMCO as an appropriate body for the management of marine mammals.

Key events and conclusions from the meeting included the following:

1. T-NASS 2015

Planning for another comprehensive Trans-North Atlantic survey for whales and dolphins in 2015 is in progress, involving cooperation with countries outside of NAMMCO, including Canada, the Russian Federation, the US and the EU countries. Periodic surveys form the corner stone of assessment of stocks, their distribution, sustainability and management.

2. Manual on Hunting of Marine Mammals

In 2010 Council approved the go-ahead for a manual on hunting. It will be the first comprehensive manual for hunters that details weaponry and ballistics information with a focus on safety.

3. Expert Group report on Assessment of Hunting Methods in Small Cetaceans

An international Expert Group on killing methods in small cetaceans met in November 2011. NAMMCO continues to be considered as an appropriate international forum for scientific advice for hunting methods. Significant reductions in killing times have been recorded in recent years in Faroe Islands, Greenland, Japan and Nunavut Canada, due to development of new equipment and practices. Several recommendations were made regarding further improvement in killing methods, safety and training of hunters. The report can be found at <http://www.nammco.no/webcronize/images/Nammco/970.pdf>

4. Advice for long-finned pilot whale and small cetaceans

NAMMCO concluded, following advice from the Scientific Committee, that an abundance of pilot whales in the range of 50 000 – 80 000 will sustain the annual Faroese drive hunt. The most recent scientific estimate of abundance for the pilot whale stock is 128,000 in the Iceland-Faroese survey area. This estimate is based on data from the latest T-NASS in 2007, coordinated by NAMMCO, meaning that the annual Faroese catch of pilot whales is well within sustainable limits.

In addition, the Scientific Committee provided advice for the first time on sustainable catch levels for long-finned pilot whale and white-beaked dolphin in Greenland.

5. Marine mammal – fisheries interactions

Based on a NAMMCO initiative, a project has been designed on testing different modelling approaches of interaction between marine mammals and fisheries. The project, which include scientists both from NAMMCO and other relevant countries, will be started on as soon as funding is obtained.

6. Council chairmanship

The Present Council chair Ole-David Stenseth, Norway, was thanked for his term of able chairmanship, and the new chair Ásta Einarsdottir, Iceland, was welcomed.

North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission

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