

Report of the Scientific Committee Working Group to plan Nass-95
Copenhagen, 2 February 1995

1 - 3 Opening procedures

The Chairman, Finn Larsen, welcomed the participants (Appendix 1) to the third meeting of the Working Group. The agenda as adopted is given in Appendix 2. The Chairman acted as rapporteur.

4. Review of available documents

Papers of relevance to the Working Group were SC/3/7, SC/3/9 and SC/NASS-95 WG/WP1. The latter is attached as Appendix 3.

5. Identification of priority species

After some discussion on whether the earlier pilot whale abundance estimates could be improved without carrying out a new survey, it was decided to keep pilot whales on the list of priority species.

6. Area coverage

6.1 Areas planned to be covered by national research programmes

- Faroe Islands - As given in SC/3/7.
- Greenland - Due to other commitments, there will be no Greenlandic participation in NASS-95.
- Iceland- As given in SC/3/7.
- Norway - As given in SC/3/7

6.2 Other areas of interest

The Working Group noted that for fin and pilot whales, present survey plans do not cover important areas in the southeastern part of the area covered by earlier NASS surveys, *i.e.* along the British Isles and the Iberian Peninsula. It was also noted that for these species there will be an important lack of coverage in the Northwestern Atlantic, *i.e.* along West Greenland and Northern North America. The Working Group further noted that for minke whales, present plans do not cover important areas, such as around the British Isles and around Greenland.

6.3 Coordination of survey effort

The Working Group agreed that the practical coordination of survey effort would be done by correspondence.

7. Methodology

7.1 Platform

As given in SC/3/7

7.2 Data collection and analysis

The Working Group recommends continuous I/O effort in passing or delayed closing mode. If the track line is left for species identification or mapping of sightings, the original line should be reentered in such a way that the likelihood of animals on the searchline being overlooked is small, and the analysis of these sightings should be relative to the original searchline. For this purpose, good positioning equipment is needed. The Working Group recognises the importance of closing on sightings which are suspected to be of unexpected species.

The Working Group recommends that sufficient time and effort should be given to mapping out sightings of pilot whales into subgroups, at least those close to the searchline (<0.5 nm), using high precision positioning systems such as GPS. The use of high-power binoculars for species identification and group size counts is also recommended.

Cues for all observations should be recorded; in particular surfacings for baleen whales and deep dives should be identified when possible. For sperm whales and northern bottlenose whales, the most important cue is the deep dive, and this point or the point where the animal is last seen at the surface should be recorded, at least up to the point where the animal is abeam of the vessel or for a time period at least as long as it would have taken the vessel to come abeam of the sighting in case the vessel slows down or diverts from the searchline.

The Working Group furthermore urges the Faroes to consider how to improve the sampling procedure for pilot whale sightings.

7.3 Problems with defining group size in pilot whale surveys

See item 7.2 above.

7.4 The use of US Navy Integrated Undersea Surveillance System data

There was nothing new to report under this item.

7.5 Improvements in present methods and new techniques for data collection

Larsen will distribute a description of the GPS-based data recording system used by Greenland Fisheries Research Institute.

Larsen will also obtain and distribute information on the high-power binoculars on poles used during the SCANS surveys.

7.6 *Survey mode considerations*

See 7.2. above

7.7. *Collection of behavioural and ancillary data*

There was nothing new to report under this item.

8. External expertise

No need for external expertise was noted.

9. Increasing the coverage of NASS-95: update on progress

The Working Group was informed that Canada has been approached by Iceland about participating in NASS-95. Canada expressed a serious interest in the surveys, but no commitment has so far been forthcoming.

It was noted by the Working Group that Canada is considering establishing an incidental sightings program for marine mammals on board vessels of opportunity.

10. Co-operation with other projects

10.1. Whale abundance in relation to environmental factors

There was nothing new to report under this item.

11. Funding

The Working Group noted that it may be possible to use part of the Scientific Committee budget to fund selected parts of NASS-95. It was also noted that the budget may be used for buying equipment that could be used during the surveys.

12. Other business

The Working Group agreed that there was no need for further meetings unless new parties become involved in the surveys

13. Adoption of report

The report was adopted on Friday, 3 February 1995.

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