

**REPORT OF THE WORKSHOP ON AGE ESTIMATION IN BELUGA**  
Beaufort, North Carolina, US  
5-9 December 2011



Participants in Workshop, Front (left to right): Barrie Ford, Rod Hobbs, Aleta Hobbs, Peter May, Rob Stewart, Dan Vog; Back: Yvan Morin, Christy Sims, Linda Vata-Bratstovson, Heather Smith, Christian Lockyer, Karen Altman, Mario Acungrone.

## **INTRODUCTION**

At its meeting in February, 2009, the Joint Scientific Working Group on Narwhal and Beluga (JWG) of the North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission (NAMMCO) and Joint Canada-Greenland Commission on Narwhal and Beluga (JCNB) supported the initiative of a workshop to produce a report on age estimation in belugas and narwhals; in particular to examine the criteria used in counting Growth Layer Groups (GLG) in teeth of belugas with a view to producing a manual to guide researchers. The JWG also recommended that a Steering Committee (SC, chaired by Lockyer and including Hobbs, Hobbs, and Stewart) work inter-sessionally to scope the problems and produce draft terms of reference for one or more workshops.

In 2010, NAMMCO noted the need to standardize ages using growth layers with new methods involving Aspartic Acid Racemisation (AAR) and recommended that a workshop on age estimation be held to review age estimation methods, and discuss how to standardize ages using GLG counts with new methods. NAMMCO encouraged the SC to proceed with the workshop's organisation following the direction provided by the NAMMCO/JCNB JWG. The SC determined that two separate workshops were required: 1) on marine mammal age estimation with a special focus on monodontids; and 2) a focused workshop to address the specific issue of beluga age estimation based on teeth. Workshop 1 was held during the workshop sessions of the 19<sup>th</sup> Biennial meeting of the Society for Marine Mammalogy in Tampa, Florida, in the US, and will be reported in a special volume of the