



TWENTY FIFTH MEETING OF THE COUNCIL
5 – 6 April 2017, Nuuk, Greenland

DOCUMENT 19 OBSERVERS' REPORT

Submitted by: SECRETARIAT

Action requested:

- For information

Overview of meetings attended by the Secretariat on behalf of NAMMCO:

- Joint ECS-ASCOBANS-ACCOBAMS Workshop in Funchal, Portugal, 12 March 2016
- ECS Workshop, Funchal, Portugal, 13 March 2016
- ECS Annual Conference, Portugal, 14-16 March 2016
- Arctic Human Health Experts Group meeting, Tromsø, Norway, 11 May 2016
- PAME/CAFF/AMAP Conference on Ecosystem Approach to Management, Fairbanks, Alaska, 23-25 August 2016
- IWC 66, Portorož, Slovenia, 20 – 28 October 2016
- ASCOBANS MOP8, Helsinki, Finland, September 30 – October 1, 2016
- Minding the Future Conference, Reykjavík, Iceland, 5 - 6 October 2016
- Arctic Circle Conference, Reykjavík, Iceland, 7 - 9 October 2016
- CAFF's CBMP-Marine annual meeting, Akureyri, Iceland, October 25 - 27, 2016

Joint ECS-ASCOBANS-ACCOBAMS Workshop in Funchal, Portugal, 12 March 2016:

“Conserving Cetaceans in the Seas Around Europe Through Synergy-building Between the Relevant Legislative Frameworks“

Desportes had been invited in a personal capacity (former coordinator for the ASCOBANS North Sea) by ASCOBANS to talk about the by-catch situation in Europe in relation to the European legislative framework. Desportes accepted within the framework of the scientific collaboration that NAMMCO wants to initiate with ASCOBANS (COUNCIL 24)

The Workshop gave an introduction to relevant instruments, a review of approaches, successes, challenges, duplications and gaps, a review of the present monitoring and mitigation of chemical contaminants, vessel strikes and area-based measures for mobile species. The Workshop discussed how best filling gaps, reducing duplication and improving synergies between the different instruments. It also discussed ways of addressing synergistic effects and cumulative impacts and agreed on a list of recommendations for improving conservation of cetaceans in European waters.

ECS Workshop, Funchal, Portugal, 13 March 2016:

“4th workshop on Communicating marine mammal science to the general public“

Desportes attended on behalf of NAMMCO. The workshop aimed at sharing educational and outreaching experiences of communicating marine mammal science to schools and the wider public. It consisted of educational programs that support school curricula and pedagogical outreach materials such as books, videos, kits, activities and exhibitions. Special focus was given to the potential and challenges of whale/seal watching as educational and conservation tools. The workshop was informative, but not so relevant for the kind of communication that NAMMCO is presently aiming at, which is more focus group oriented and less wider public.

ECS Annual Conference, Portugal, 14-16 March 2016:

“Into the Deep: Research and Conservation on Oceanic Marine Mammals“

Desportes attended on behalf of NAMMCO. The management of human activities in offshore areas and the enforcement of measures to minimize their impact on the marine environment still face many constraints related to the vastness of the oceans, in spite of the recent technological developments such as, satellites, drones, underwater autonomous vehicles, among others. The conference aimed at highlighting current issues and emphasised the importance of continuing to develop and implement legal and management tools for the conservation and sustainable use of offshore areas.

Noteworthy was a presentation on fin whale in the North Atlantic claiming that the species was endangered in the North East Atlantic, referring to the UN world stock status. It became clear that the presenter was not aware or did not want to consider the regional IUCN European assessment. This anecdote once more demonstrates that the wider scientific public is hardly aware of the actual status of marine mammal stocks in the North East Atlantic. The ECS is a regional forum where NAMMCO should become active and report on the status of stocks of marine mammals and the progress accomplished in sustainable management under the umbrella of NAMMCO. The efforts of NAMMCO in applying an ecosystem approach to management should also be set in focus. NAMMCO will have two posters at the 2017 conference – one on

“Necessity and challenges in using an Ecosystem Approach to the management of marine mammals: ensuring sustainable ecosystem services“ and one on “The Geometer: A new device for aerial surveys“.

Arctic Human Health Experts Group, under the Arctic Council (AC) Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG), Tromso, Norway, May 11, 2016

Most topics were not directly relevant to NAMMCO. Desportes presented the work made by NAMMCO and discussed possible cooperation on the NAMMCO project “Marine Mammals as Food Resources”, seeing a link with the recently endorsed WG project: the Arctic as a Food Producing Region. A point was raised that AHHEG or SDWG can’t advocate or address this topic if trade in marine mammals is the theme, since that is not accepted by all AC member states. However, if nutritional value of marine mammals for local residents is the focus, then AHHEG/SDWG could be involved. ICC would look into this possibility. Since this was overlap with cultural issues, co-chairs referred also to the SDWG Social, Economic and Cultural Expert Group (SECEG).

PAME/CAFF/AMAP Ecosystem Approach to Management: Status of Implementation in the Arctic, 23-25 August 2016, Fairbanks, Alaska

Prewitt attended on behalf of NAMMCO. The conference brought together 68 participants from across the Arctic, the Arctic Council working groups, Indigenous Peoples organizations, and others. It was an excellent opportunity to see presentations and discuss with other participants on what an Ecosystem Approach to management actually entails, and how it can be implemented in various ways. Especially interesting was a presentation by Carolina Behe from the Inuit Circumpolar Council-Alaska, discussing how traditional knowledge can be integrated into management. Prewitt gave a presentation on NAMMCO’s role in implementing an Ecosystem Approach to management: “Benefits of Ecosystem Based Management for Marine Mammals”. This presentation was one of the only times marine mammals were mentioned during the conference, therefore it was an important reminder to keep the upper trophic parts of the ecosystem (including humans and marine mammals) in mind. In addition, most of the attendees were not aware of NAMMCO, so the presentation and discussions during the breaks were a good opportunity to let other scientists, managers, and stakeholders in the Arctic know who NAMMCO is and what we do.

International Whaling Commission (IWC) 66th meeting, Portorož, Slovenia

Winsnes attended the Sub-Committees/Working Group (20 -22 October) and the Commission meetings (24 – 28 October) on behalf of NAMMCO.

Sub-Committees

NAMMCO presented its work on TTD and animal welfare in the Working group on whale killing methods and welfare issues (WKM). The Chair of the WKM had asked that the presentation also touched upon possible cooperation between NAMMCO and IWC. NAMMCO also gave a statement to the Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling Sub-Committee (ASW) on the importance of the Maniitsoq workshop in 2015 (Winsnes had participated) and the issues of indigenous peoples’ rights.

Commission meeting

The main points of the presentation given at the WKM and the statement in the ASW were summarised in several interventions given to the Commission meeting by Winsnes.

General comment:

The Conservation Committee has gained quite a foothold in the organisation and is expanding. Exceedingly more time and resources are used on issues related to animal welfare and small cetaceans – as exemplified by the issue of by-catch.

IWC endorsed the IWC SC advise that all present ASW catch/strike limits will not harm the stocks. The presentation from Dr Dorrough, an expert of the UN forum on indigenous peoples generated extensive discussion. In the end IWC acknowledged the value of improving process and increasing understanding of issues surrounding ASW. The ASW sub-committee was tasked with looking at the Maniitsoq expert workshop report to give recommendation, as appropriate, to IWC67 in 2018. The IWC67 represents an important meeting as the ASW quotas are up for discussion again, and as such the meeting will be a test of the functionality of IWC.

ASCOBANS MOP8, Helsinki, Finland, September 30 – October 1, 2016

The 8th Meeting of the Parties to the Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans in the Baltic, North East Atlantic, Irish and North Seas (ASCOBANS) took place 30 August to 1 September 2016 in Helsinki, Finland. Desportes attended on behalf of NAMMCO.

Along with discussions on strategic and institutional subjects, ASCOBANS Parties considered species action plans and resolutions on current conservation challenges, including ocean energy, pollution from Polychlorinated Biphenyls, unexploded underwater munitions, anthropogenic noise, bycatch and cumulative impacts. Thirteen resolutions were adopted, including one on By-Catch PCBs, Common Dolphin, Ocean Energy, Noise and Cumulative Impacts.

Following up on the NAMMCO Council 24 decision to strengthening its cooperation with among others, ASCOBANS, the NAMMCO Opening Statement delivered at MOPs8 conveyed an invitation to ASCOBANS *“to enhance the scientific cooperation between the two organisations to the benefits of small cetacean conservation. Three issues of shared concerns come to mind: by-catch monitoring, estimation and mitigation; the assessment of North Sea harbour porpoises, a shared stock between NAMMCO and ASCOBANS; and the monitoring of the effect of persistent organic pollutants on marine top predators.”*

Minding the Future Conference, Reykjavík, Iceland, 5-6 October 2016

“Minding the future – Bioeconomy in a changing Nordic reality“ was the closing conference of the NordBio initiative, which has taken a holistic approach to the bioeconomy, bringing experts in education, research and innovation together with industry and policy makers in the quest to promote sustainable production and use of living natural resources. The conference featured presentations of product development based on sustainable and optimised use of biological resources.

Desportes attended the conference which was interesting and brought forward many examples of bio- blue- and circular economy in Nordic countries, some in very innovative domains, as well as ways to progress. Noticeably, although many unusual food resources were brought to the attention of the wider public by the different projects, like insects for example, there was not a single mention over the two days the conference lasted of marine mammals as potential food resources.

Arctic Circle Conference, Reykjavik, Iceland, 7-9 October 2016

The annual Arctic Circle Assembly is the largest annual international gathering on international dialogue and cooperation on the future of the Arctic. Over 2000 participants from more than 45 countries attended the 2016 Arctic Circle Assembly, NAMMCO organised the break-out session „*Sustainable marine resources: a piece of the Blue Economy puzzle in the Arctic?*”, which was well attended by ca. 50 people from Greenland, Iceland, Faroes, Norway as well as USA, Canada, Japan, Denmark, Sweden, UK and more.

The session attempted to bring out the main facts regarding the biology, management and international commitments regarding marine mammal resources in the North. A special focus was given to the economic and cultural importance of these resources, with the consequences of the EU seal ban for the livelihood of Greenlandic communities.

The outputs of the discussion can be summarised as follows.

- The right to the sustainable utilisation of living marine resources, including marine mammals, are at the core of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the law of the Sea and the 1992 Rio Declaration on Environment and Development: Sustainability was the new deal, as well as Rio+20 summit.
- The science is there for permitting the sustainable management of marine mammal resources, if the will and the necessary scientific monitoring are there, which is the case in NAMMCO Countries.
- The stocks exploited by NAMMCO parties can support the present level of removals - see the IWC webpage for fin, humpback, bowhead and minke whales for example. The EU seal ban has considerable negative consequences on the small communities in Greenland, both familial, societal and economic.
- The difficulty resides in conveying the message to the urbanised world, so responsible hunting communities are no longer demonised and sustainable, local whaling and sealing are perceived as what they are: a green, resource-efficient, low-carbon and ecologically responsible way of acquiring food and supporting food security, that in total agreement with the concept of Blue economy.

CAFF's CBMP-Marine annual meeting, Akureyri, Iceland, October 25-27, 2016

The Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Program (CBMP) under the CAFF (Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna, the biodiversity Working Group of the Arctic Council) organizes its work around the major ecosystems of the Arctic, marine, freshwater, terrestrial and coastal.

Desportes became a member of the Marine Mammal Expert Group at the last meeting in October 2015.

The CBMP – Marine held its annual meeting in Iceland, October 25-27, with the aim of finalising the draft of the State of the Arctic Marine Ecosystem Report (SAMBR - to be released to the Arctic Council Ministerial meeting in April 2017). The report presents baselines, trends and drivers of Arctic marine biodiversity at different trophic levels (Arctic sea ice biota, plankton, benthos, fishes, seabirds and marine mammals) by Arctic Marine Areas in the light of climate change. The Marine Mammal Expert Group reviewed and completed the abundance and trend dataset (and cascading text and graphs) for all the Arctic stocks of the 11 marine mammals that had been chosen as Focal Ecosystem Components (FECs) for evaluating changes in Arctic biodiversity: beluga, narwhal, bowhead whales, ringed bearded, harp, hooded, spotted and ribbon seals, walrus and polar bear.