



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

**DOCUMENT 27 NEW PROPOSALS FOR CONSERVATION AND
MANAGEMENT TO MEMBER COUNTRIES**

**Submitted by: MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE FOR CETACEANS AND
MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE FOR SEALS AND WALRUSES**

Action requested:

- Review the proposals

NEW PROPOSALS FOR CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT TO MEMBER COUNTRIES

ALL SPECIES

By-catch recommendations:

- Norway, increase the reliability and the accuracy of the by-catch data in areas with high by-catch (i.e. especially Lofoten and Vesterålen) by increasing the number of vessels included in the CRF and ensure a better species identification of by-caught seals.
- Iceland, obtain by-catch rate for the cod GILL NET fishery outside the April peak season,
- Faroese, modify the logbook for allowing for by-catch species identification and provide to the next WG meeting data on the fleet especially on the pelagic and semi-pelagic trawl fisheries including VHVO trawl (fleet composition, relative effort and by-catch information).
- Greenland, provide information on the reliability of by-catch reporting for all species.

General recommendation that fisheries expertise should participate at meeting and that the work should be linked to the ICES Working Group on By-catch.

SEALS AND WALRUSES

Grey seal

Norway

- Development of the model to see if it can be modified to account for the observed changes in pup production.
- More frequent surveys, particularly in the areas of decline.
- Tagging of grey seal pups.
- Age-structure of the hunt assumed to be the same as for the by-catch, and this assumption needs to be tested
- Complete the genetics study within this year
- Increase the number of vessels in the reference fleet in the areas of high by-catch (especially Nordland)
- Reporting of all removals. Currently there is little to no reporting of removals around fish farms and from both commercial gill net fisheries and recreational fisheries

Iceland

Primary

- A Management Plan should be developed including: the frequency of surveys, legislation of seal hunting and re-evaluation of the target population level objective with the new level being based on biological criteria.
- A complete survey should be conducted to obtain a full, reliable abundance estimate
- Reporting of all removals (e.g., by-catches, hunted seals, any other removals)

Next steps

- Pup production surveys at least 3 times to make sure that the peak pupping period is covered.
- o Iceland should also consider tagging pups for staging.
- o Iceland should also investigate whether the peaks in pupping differ in different areas around the country.
- Genetics samples should be collected and analysed to explore stock structure

The need for a reporting system for direct catches was underlined to be able to model the status of the population.

Faroe Islands

- develop a monitoring plan that includes regular assessments.
- based on existing data analyse population viability (population size necessary to sustain the levels of removals)
- Analyse existing UK telemetry data for possible migration between the UK and the Faroes.
- new research to be undertaken

First Priorities

- Obtain minimum population estimates via haulout counts.
- Obtain reliable and complete reporting of all removals (e.g., all companies operating fish farms need to report).

Secondary Priorities

- Telemetry tagging studies to develop correction factors for the haulout counts and also obtain information on movements and distribution
- Samples should be collected from animals shot at farms (e.g., jaws to obtain information on age, sex, genetics etc.).
- A study using cameras to observe animals going in and out of caves
- Photo-ID study for a mark-recapture based population size

Harbour Seals

Norway

- Increase the number of vessels in the reference fleet in the areas of high by-catch (especially Nordland that has a long coastline)
- Increase survey effort. Important areas could be identified to be surveyed in between other full-coast surveys.
- Management by county should be re-examined, as these management units do not always follow the population structure of harbour seals, especially Nordland county.
- Reporting of all removals, including removals around fish farms, or of by-catches in commercial gill net fisheries and recreational fisheries.
- Collect data from by-catches (age, sex, etc.).

Iceland

- An assessment survey of the entire population should be conducted as soon as possible
 - o Surveys should then be conducted every 2 years while the population is lower than the target level
- All removals should be reported (e.g., hunting, by-catch, etc.)

- A Management Plan should be developed including outlining the frequency of surveys and legislation of seal hunting
- The target population level objective should be re-evaluated and be based on biological criteria.
- Reproductive rates should be collected
- The effects of disturbance from tourism should continue to be investigated
 - o Develop mitigation measures
- The method of catching pups in nets should be investigated. In NAMMCO, killing methods should be immediate. This issue should be referred to the NAMMCO Hunting Committee.

Norway

Recommendations for the Norwegian Harbour and Grey Seal Management Plans

- the target population levels for both species should be evaluated as the levels are not based on any biological assessment.
- to recommend that the quota is set to 0 when the population is at 70% of the target level instead of 50%.
- Management plans should include all sources of mortality, not just the hunt.
- A mechanism for consulting IMR on for example seal distribution when fish farms are being built should be required when management plans are revised.

Walrus

Greenland

The SC had reviewed past recommendations from the 2013 Walrus Working Group, and recommended prioritized these for a future assessment:

- 1) New abundance estimates
- 2) Age-structure of catches
- 3) Catch statistics from Canada (*available*)
- 4) Struck and lost rates. This is lowest priority for the assessment, however not having newer, reliable struck and lost rates will affect the quotas given (e.g., if the struck and lost rates that are being used are high, then the quotas will be lower). If better struck and lost rates are obtained, quotas may increase.

CETACEANS

Fin whale

All the parties involved in fin whale estimation (NASS, Americans, Canadians, etc.) should cooperate to be able to work towards combining the estimates from different areas and different years. This would likely increase the current total abundance for the North Atlantic of 53,000 fin whales (IUCN 2013).

Quota advice

a catch limit of 161 fin whales in the WI area and 48 in EI/F area (based on application of the RMP to the EG+WI+EI/F region) is safe and precautionary, and that this advice should be considered valid for a maximum of 8 years (2018 to 2025).

Research to inform a future assessment:

- Information on stock identity: Incorporating samples from a wider geographical area into an existing study on close-kin relationship of whales caught off Iceland and Greenland, e.g. using biopsies.
- Gathering information on the annual cycle of fin whales including overall movements and indications of possible breeding areas (e.g. applying satellite telemetry).
- Continued collection of biological samples for age, reproduction, etc. from whales caught off Iceland.

Minke whale*Iceland***Quota advice**

Annual catch of about 360 minke whales is a lower bound for the sustainable catch for the Central North Atlantic medium area, and the advice of the WG of catch levels of 217 common minke whales from the CIC sub-area.

New recommendations for research to inform management

- Update after RMP Implementation Review, use this to provide long-term advice
- MSY rate re-evaluated, determine more appropriate MSY rate
- collection of age/sex/reproductive data (existing information is outdated, low sample sizes) (New proposal 3.2.6)

Belugas and Narwhals

Regarding **R-1.5.3**, the SC recommended that:

- Issues of disturbance should be discussed at the NAMMCO-JCNB JWG
- Detailed information on the Mary River Project should be made available to the JWG
- JWG should routinely include information sharing on projects that would affect belugas and narwhals in Baffin Bay
- There is a need for a formalized mechanism for cross-border assessment for how these shared stocks are dealt with.
- The SC recommends that GINR is consulted when projects are in development, before final approval, or if the project plans change and/or develop further.

Recommendations for research

The SC recommended additional satellite tagging to get information on movements and distribution.