



Press Release – April 6, 2017

NAMMCO - 25th Annual Council in Nuuk

25 years of sustainable management

This year marks the 25th anniversary of NAMMCO. The importance of NAMMCO as a management organisation for marine mammals in the North Atlantic is confirmed by the progress accomplished during these years. The sustainable and responsible use of marine mammals has benefitted from

- better knowledge on marine mammal populations and their sustainable management,
- sound management advice that has contributed to increases in marine mammal population sizes
- significant improvements in hunting methods
- the establishment of an effective observation scheme for hunting activities in member countries.

At the meeting, the Council adopted a Communication and Outreach Strategy and decided to undertake a Performance Review of the organisation by external experts. A new website www.nammco.no was launched, containing information on the conservation and management status of all marine mammal population, as well as matters related to marine mammals in a broader sense. The Council also decided to advance the work on by-catch, entanglement and live strandings by establishing a Working Group dealing with these issues.

The parties reaffirmed their commitment to enhance their cooperation regarding marine mammal research, conservation, and management and the improvement of hunting methods. They agreed on a common declaration reaffirming their will in ensuring the sustainable and responsible use of marine mammals.

For more information concerning the Council Meeting outcome, see below.

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Appendix

NAMMCO - the North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission - is an international body for cooperation on the conservation, management and study of marine mammals in the North Atlantic. The North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission held its 25th Council meeting from 5 - 6 April 2017, in Nuuk, Greenland.

At the occasion of the 25th Anniversary of the Commission, the member countries of NAMMCO, the Faroe Islands, Greenland, Iceland and Norway firmly reiterated their commitment to ensuring the conservation and sustainable and responsible use of marine mammals through active regional cooperation and science-based management decisions.

Hunters from Greenland and representatives from the Association of Fishers and Hunters in Greenland participated in the meeting.

The Governments of Canada and Japan were represented by observers at the meeting, as well as other international governmental organizations within the fields whaling (International Whaling Commission, IWC) and conservation (IWMC World Conservation Trust, Livelihood International). A large delegation of Nunavut also participated to the meeting, with members of the Government of Nunavut led by the Minister of Environment Joe Savikataaq, the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board and Nunavut Tunngavik Inc.

Key events and conclusions from the meeting included the following:

25 years of Hunting

Anton Egede had been invited to present the hunters experiences of the changes that had taken place in the management of marine mammals during 25 years. His presentation “*Whaling in west Greenland – then and now*” underlined in particular the visible effect that climate change is having on the availability of marine mammals to the hunters.

Dr. Med. Vet. Egil Ole Øen, through his invited presentation “*Animal welfare in the execution of hunting – a key to public acceptance of whaling and sealing*” described the work conducted for improving hunting methods during the 25 years of NAMMCO. He presented in particular the substantial improvement that had happened both regarding animal welfare, e.g. reduced time to death, and hunters’ security.

Inspection and Observation of Hunts

NAMMCO operates an international observation scheme to monitor whether national legislation and decisions made by the Commission are respected. Observers are appointed to report on hunting activities in member countries. The scope for 2017 is minke whaling in Iceland.

Whale and seal Surveys

Surveys were carried out in the NAMMCO member countries in 2015 and 2016 to update the knowledge on abundance and distribution of cetaceans in the North Atlantic. At NAMMCO-25, new abundance estimates based on the data collected during these surveys were presented for fin, humpback, common minke and pilot whales, harbour porpoises, and dolphins.

New abundance estimates were also provided for grey and harbour seals in Norway.

International Cooperation

With the unforeseeable consequences of climate change on marine mammals, the Council reiterated its will to increase the cooperation between organisations dealing with marine mammals.

Quota advice

New quota advice was given for fin whales and minke whales off Iceland, harp seals in the Greenland Sea and White/Barents Sea.

Scientific Advice

The best scientific evidence forms the basis of management advice in NAMMCO. Through the Scientific Committee, many specialist topics are addressed by Expert Working groups. During 2017, topics to be dealt with include 1) stock assessments of fin, humpback and common minke whales as well as narwhals and belugas, 2) a global circumpolar review of the conservation status of beluga and narwhal stocks, 3) a review of by-catch of marine mammals by NAMMCO countries, and 4) a workshop in cooperation with scientists having conducted surveys in waters adjacent to the NAMMCO survey areas to gain a wider perspective on cetacean distribution and abundance in the whole North Atlantic.

The Scientific Committee was also tasked to advise on the best process to investigate the effects of non-hunting related anthropogenic impacts on marine mammals.