

2.1
REPORT OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Akureyri, Iceland, October 6-7, 1999

1. – 3. OPENING PROCEDURES

The Chairman of the Management Committee, Kaj P. Mortensen, welcomed delegations and observers to the meeting. Participants were as listed in Appendix 3 of the Report of the Council. The agenda, as contained in Appendix 1, was adopted. Documents available to the meeting are listed in Appendix 2. The General and Scientific Secretaries agreed to act as rapporteurs.

4. NATIONAL PROGRESS REPORTS

National Progress reports were available to the Management Committee from the Faroe Islands, Iceland and Norway for 1998, and from Greenland for 1997 (See Appendix 2).

With respect to the National Progress Reports for Report submitted by Norway, the Faroe Islands enquired about the quota for minke whales in the Jan Mayen area, and whether there was any directed harvest of small cetaceans in Norway. Norway indicated that the quota was 66 minke whales in the Jan Mayen area. Norway further replied that it was forbidden by law to catch any cetacean without a permit, and that permits were only issued for minke whales

The Management Committee took note of the reports and thanked the member countries for this information.

5. PROPOSALS FOR CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT

5.1 Earlier proposals

The Chairman drew the attention of the meeting to the updated list of proposals for conservation and management decided by NAMMCO since its establishment (NAMMCO/9/MC/3). He invited information from the Parties on developments with regard to earlier proposals. See Appendix 3 for the updated list of proposals for conservation and management including this meeting.

Atlantic Walrus

With respect to the proposal for conservation and management of Atlantic walrus agreed in 1995, Greenland reported that no new measures had been implemented in addition to those taken in 1998 (see NAMMCO Annual Report 1998: 74).

5.2 New proposals

5.2.1 Advice from the Scientific Committee

In response to an enquiry from Greenland, the Chairman of the Scientific Committee clarified that the Committee does not automatically update previously given advice as

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new information is made available. The Scientific Committee operates only on the basis of requests from Council. There are however, certain standing requests, such as that to monitor stock levels and trends in stocks of all marine mammals in the North Atlantic, which are updated as new information is received.

i. Harp Seals in the White Sea/Barents Sea

The Management Committee noted the stock status and catch options presented by the Scientific Committee.

The Management Committee concluded that the catch level in 1998 was well below the calculated replacement yield. Catches at the same level in the future may result in population increase. From the point of view of resource management, future quota levels approaching the replacement yield are advised.

ii. Harp Seals in the Greenland Sea

The Management Committee noted the stock status and catch options presented by the Scientific Committee.

The Management Committee concluded that the catch level in 1998 was well below the calculated replacement yield. Catches at the same level in the future may result in population increase. From the point of view of resource management, future quota levels approaching the replacement yield are advised.

iii. Hooded Seals in the Greenland Sea

The Management Committee noted the stock status and catch options presented by the Scientific Committee.

The Management Committee concluded that the catch level in 1998 was well below the calculated replacement yield. Catches at the same level in the future may result in population increase. From the point of view of resource management, future quota levels approaching the replacement yield are advised.

iv. North Atlantic beluga and narwhal

I. Beluga in West Greenland

Maniitsoq – Disko Bay

The Management Committee noted that a series of surveys conducted since 1981 indicate a decline of more than 60% in abundance in the area from Maniitsoq to Disko Bay.

The Management Committee further noted that with the present harvest levels (estimated at 400/yr) the aggregation of beluga in this area is likely declining due to overexploitation.

Avanersuaq – Upernavik

The present harvest in the area Avanersuaq - Upernavik is estimated to be more than 100/yr. The Management Committee noted that since this beluga occurrence must be

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considered part of those wintering in the area from Maniitsoq to Disko Bay, it is considered to be declining due to overexploitation.

Finally the Management Committee noted the conclusion by the Scientific Committee that with the observed decline a reduction in harvesting in both areas seems necessary to halt or reverse the trend.

2. *Narwhal in West Greenland*

Avanersuaq

The Management Committee noted that the present exploitation level in Avanersuaq of 150/yr seems to be sustainable, assuming that the same stock is not harvested in other areas.

Melville Bay – Upernavik

The Management Committee noted that the Scientific Committee could give no status for the Melville Bay – Upernavik summering stock.

Ummannaq

The Management Committee noted that the substantial catches (several hundreds) in some years do cause concern for the status of this aggregation. The Management Committee further noted that the abundance of narwhal in this area should be estimated.

Disko Bay

The Management Committee noted that present catches in this area are probably sustainable.

Catch Statistics

The Management Committee noted that for both narwhal and beluga it is mandatory for future management that more reliable catch statistics (including loss rates) are collected from Canada and Greenland.

v. *North Atlantic fin whales*

The Management Committee accepted that for fin whales in the East Greenland/Iceland (EGI) stock area, removals of 200 animals per year would be unlikely to bring the population down below 70% of its pre-exploitation level in the next 10 years, even under the least optimistic scenarios. However, catches at this level should be spread throughout the EGI stock area, roughly in proportion to the abundance of fin whales observed in the NASS surveys.

Furthermore, the Management Committee stressed that the utilisation of this stock should be followed by regular monitoring of the trend in the stock size.

The Management Committee also noted the conservative nature of the advice from the Scientific Committee on which the conclusion of the Management Committee was based (see Report of the Scientific Committee, item 9.6).

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vi. Incorporation of the users' knowledge in the deliberations of the Scientific Committee

The Management Committee endorsed the proposals and viewpoints contained in section 6 in the Scientific Committee report.

The Committee suggested that the "Draft Minke Whale Stock Status Report" (NAMMCO/9/7) could usefully serve as a pilot project for co-operation with the hunters.

In order to solve the many practical questions in the pilot project process the Committee agreed that the proposed Assessment Committee should carefully prepare for the meeting on the "Draft Minke Whale Stock Status Report", and in particular work with the Secretariat with respect to the following questions:

- Define areas and type of information subject to dialogue between scientists and minke whale hunters
- Should the scientists meet minke whale hunters from all interested countries at the same time, or should there be meetings between scientists and minke whale hunters in each of the interested countries?
- Time and venue for meetings
- Papers to be distributed before the meetings
- Language / interpretation
- How to select hunters with relevant knowledge
- Planning of questions to be asked to hunters

This preparatory work will take place through correspondence and telephone meetings.

The Assessment Committee should report to the Management Committee on the pilot project.

5.2.2 Other proposals

None

6. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

6.1 Recommendations from the Scientific Committee

The Chairman of the Scientific Committee reiterated the recommendations for scientific research from the Report of the Scientific Committee.

North Atlantic Beluga and Narwhal

The Management Committee noted and endorsed the research recommendations conveyed on pages 43-46 of the Report of the Scientific Committee, and urged member and non-member states to act on these recommendations.

North Atlantic Fin Whales

The Management Committee noted and endorsed the research recommendations conveyed on pages 17-18 of the Report of the Scientific Committee, and urged member and non-member states to act on these recommendations.

White-Beaked and White-Sided Dolphins

The Management Committee noted the conclusion of the Scientific Committee that there is insufficient information on stock structure, abundance and feeding ecology to carry out a meaningful assessment of these species at this time, and urged member and non-member states to initiate research to fill these information gaps. (See also under 6.2.1 below).

6.2 Other recommendations

6.2.1 Former requests from the Council

The Chairman referred the meeting to the document entitled *Summary of Requests by NAMMCO Council to the Scientific Committee and Responses by the Scientific Committee* (Appendix 4 – **updated to include this meeting**). The Management Committee commented on the usefulness of this documentation, and urged that it be maintained and updated on a regular basis.

NASS-95

The Management Committee noted particularly that abundance estimates from NASS-95 have not been completed for some species. The Management Committee therefore recommended that the Scientific Committee complete abundance estimates for all species, as part of its efforts to monitor the abundance of all species in the North Atlantic.

White-sided and white-beaked dolphins

At its Eighth Meeting in 1998, the Council agreed to the recommendation of the Management Committee to request the Scientific Committee to perform an assessment of distribution, stock identity, abundance and ecological interactions of white-beaked and white-sided dolphins in the North Atlantic area.

The Management Committee noted the conclusion of the Scientific Committee that there is insufficient information on stock structure, abundance and feeding ecology to carry out a meaningful assessment of these species at this time.

The Management Committee further noted that, in addition to the focus of the Management Committee's former request for advice on these species in relation to their ecological interactions with fisheries, these dolphin species are harvested in significant numbers in the Faroe Islands.

The Management Committee therefore agreed to recommend that the Scientific Committee be tasked with facilitating the requested assessment of these species, with an emphasis on the following:

- to analyse results from NASS 95 and other sightings surveys as a basis for establishing abundance estimates for the stocks;

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- to co-ordinate the efforts of member countries to conduct research to fill the noted information gaps, taking advantage in particular of the sampling opportunities provided by the Faroese catch, as well as dedicated sampling in other areas.

6.2.2 New recommendations from Member Countries

i. North Atlantic Beluga and Narwhal

The Management Committee noted its appreciation for the comprehensive status reports on beluga and narwhal in the North Atlantic.

In this respect, the Management Committee requested advice from the Scientific Committee on the level of sustainable utilisation of West Greenland beluga in different areas and under different management objectives.

For narwhal, the Management Committee requested that the Scientific Committee identify the information that is lacking in order to answer the same question proposed in respect to beluga.

ii. Fin Whales

The Management Committee noted that the Scientific Committee has completed its assessment of the stock structure of fin whales in North Atlantic, and that more research on stock structure is required before firm conclusions can be drawn. The Management Committee therefore recommended that member countries initiate the research required to elucidate the stock structure of fin whales.

The Management Committee recommended that the Scientific Committee continue its assessment of fin whale stocks in the North Atlantic, focussing in the near term on the status of fin whales in Faroese waters. The Scientific Committee should focus particularly on the following issues:

- Assess the long-term effects of annual removals of 5, 10 and 20 fin whales in Faroese waters;
- Information gaps that may need to be filled in order to complete a full assessment in this area.

iii. North Atlantic Sightings Surveys

The Management Committee recommended that the Scientific Committee continue its efforts to co-ordinate future sighting surveys and analyses of the results from such surveys in the North Atlantic. Priority species should be minke whales and fin whales, and the Management Committee recommended that the survey design be optimised for these species. The survey should also be optimised to cover those areas where abundance estimates are most urgently required.

iv. Bottlenosed Dolphins

The Management Committee noted that bottlenosed dolphins, like white-sided and white-beaked dolphins, are also harvested in the coastal drive fishery in the Faroe Islands.

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The Management Committee agreed to recommend that, in connection with the updated request for advice from the Scientific Committee on white-sided and white-beaked dolphins, that bottlenosed dolphins also be included in this assessment (see under 6.2.1).

v. Language used in the Report of the Scientific Committee

With respect to the language used in the Report of the Scientific Committee, Greenland and the Faroe Islands suggested that it be kept precise and simple. The Management Committee agreed to convey this as a suggestion to the Scientific Committee.

7. REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP ON BY-CATCH

The Chairman drew the attention of the Management Committee to the Report of the Working Group on By-Catch (NAMMCO/9/MC/7-rev). The Working Group met in Akureyri on October 5 and was attended by representatives for all member countries. Arne Bjørge (Norway) was elected as Chairman. (See Appendix 5).

Noting the Working Group's recommendation to approve a definition of marine mammal by-catch, the Management Committee agreed that the following would be an appropriate working definition for the Working Group:

“Recognising that by-catch of marine mammals may be a valuable contribution to the total catch, an appropriate definition of marine mammal by-catch is: marine mammals taken incidentally in fisheries targeting other species.”

The Management Committee further agreed to the recommendations of the Working Group to establish an intersessional correspondence group with the following terms of reference:

- To look at different procedures to collect by-catch information and to compare benefits and drawbacks from the experiences in the member countries;
- To prepare for discussion of quality control of the by-catch data by the Scientific Committee;
- To prepare a NAMMCO policy on the use of marine mammal by-catch data.

It was further agreed that the intersessional correspondence group should meet prior to the next annual meeting of the Management Committee to discuss progress achieved by member nations and the work undertaken by the group itself, and to report on this to the Management Committee.

8. REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP ON INSPECTION AND OBSERVATION

The Chairman referred to the Report of the NAMMCO Management Committee Working Group on Inspection and Observation, which had met in November 1998 (NAMMCO/9/MC/5).

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The Management Committee accepted the recommendations of the Working Group that article 15 of the Guidelines be reworded as follows:

“Appointed observers receive a letter of appointment and a copy of the provisions of the Joint NAMMCO Control Scheme from the Secretariat. When a detailed plan of observation activities for the year is finalised, those observers who will be called upon for active observation will receive an employment contract from the Secretariat. When both parties sign this, the observer will receive an identification card, as well as other relevant documentation necessary for his/her duties. The observer shall return his/her identification card to the Secretariat together with the final report of activities, and shall then receive a letter from the Secretariat confirming his/her completion of duties according to the Scheme.”

The Management Committee agreed to forward the amended wording of the Provisions to the Council for formal adoption.

The Management Committee recommended that the Finance and Administration Committee consider the financial and administrative matters of the Joint NAMMCO Control Scheme.

9. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE JOINT NAMMCO CONTROL SCHEME

9.1 NAMMCO International Observation Scheme 1999

The Chairman referred to the report of the NAMMCO International Observation Scheme under the Joint NAMMCO Control Scheme for the Hunting of Marine Mammals, prepared by the Secretariat (NAMMCO/9/MC/6). The General Secretary presented the report to the Management Committee.

Recognising that there were some operational and administrative matters with regard to the Scheme that needed to be dealt with, the Management Committee agreed to task an *ad hoc* Working Group on the Observation Scheme with the following mandate:

“To review the implementation of the Observation Scheme to examine practical and administrative matters requiring consideration and development, and seek better co-ordination of the observation activities.”

The Management Committee recommended that the group meets early November 1999, in order to meet the deadline of the appointment of observers by the member countries.

9.2 NAMMCO International Observation Scheme 2000

The Secretary will implement the Scheme after consulting the *ad hoc* Working Group on the Observation Scheme. The Management Committee highlighted the need to start this work as soon as possible.

9.3 Other matters

None

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Storage and handling of marine mammal catch data at the Secretariat

The Chairman noted that Council had referred the matter of the storage and handling of marine mammal catch data in the Secretariat to the Management Committee for advice, and in this respect referred the meeting to the report prepared by the Secretariat on this matter (NAMMCO/9/6). While noting that the catch database was not detailed enough to be of use to the Scientific Committee for assessment purposes, the Management Committee nevertheless agreed to recommend that a catch database should be maintained at the Secretariat. This was to enable the Secretariat to respond to enquiries about the harvesting activities of member countries. The Management Committee furthermore recommended that the catch database be expanded to include species not covered so far, that catch data be transmitted to the Secretariat on an annual basis through the National Progress Reports, and that the formats of the Reports be modified according to Appendix 1 of NAMMCO/9/6.

Improving the public perception of marine mammal products

Norway introduced a paper dealing with enhancing the utilisation and marketing of marine mammal products. The Management Committee agreed that NAMMCO might have a role to play in this area, particularly in the area of utilisation and marketing. The Management Committee therefore agreed to recommend that the Council should have the Secretariat prepare a discussion paper for the next meeting, dealing with the following general issues:

- The possibilities for enhancing trade and marketing in marine mammal products among NAMMCO member countries;
- The economic opportunities for coastal peoples in member states afforded by an increased utilisation and trade in marine mammal products;
- Options for increasing the marketing and utilisation of marine mammal products, in NAMMCO member countries.

11. ADOPTION OF REPORT

A draft report of the meeting, containing all matters of substance agreed by the Management Committee, was reviewed and approved. The final, edited version of the report was adopted by correspondence after the meeting.