



NORTH ATLANTIC MARINE MAMMAL COMMISSION

6 February 2002, Hotel Arctic, Ilulissat, Greenland

Report of the Management Committee Working Group on Bycatch Telephone meeting, 15 January 2002

Chairman Arne Bjørge welcomed the participants to the meeting (see Appendix 1).

1. Adoption of Agenda

The draft agenda (Appendix 2) was adopted without change.

2. Appointment of Rapporteur

Daniel Pike, Scientific Secretary of NAMMCO, was appointed as rapporteur for the meeting.

3. Information regarding ongoing monitoring and management of marine mammal bycatches outside the NAMMCO Area

3.1 European Union Initiative

Bjørge presented a summary of a report from a working group on incidental takes of small cetaceans, organised by the Fishery and Environment in Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries, of the Commission of European Communities that was held in Brussels, 10-14 December, 2001. The working group consisted of nineteen delegates from research and management in fifteen countries. A second, final working group meeting will be held in March 2002. The resulting report will be used by the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries when revising EU's Common Fishery Policy (CFP). The aim is to incorporate cetacean bycatch as an Environmental Concern in the CFP.

A major constraint for the working group was the general lack of information on both cetacean abundance and bycatch, as well as lack of fishing effort statistics. The information lack renders estimation of total bycatch rates within the different areas impossible.

By 2002, logbooks will be mandatory on fishing vessels greater than 10 m in EU waters. A new data collection regime in EU will start in 2002 to increase availability of the logbook data. Logbooks provide a minimum bycatch estimate. Experience from observer programs demonstrates the necessity of using independent observers to obtain precise bycatch estimates.

The working group approved of the Potential Biological Removal Level (PBR) method to identify acceptable by-catch limits. PBR is defined as the maximum number of animals, not including natural mortality, that may be removed from a marine mammal stock while allowing that stock to reach or maintain its optimal sustainable population size. The PBR

method is adopted by the US under the Marine Mammal Protection Act and in ASCOBANS (Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic and North Seas). In several of the areas where estimates of cetacean abundance and bycatch were available, bycatch levels exceeded acceptable levels identified by the PBR.

In several EU countries, methods for bycatch reduction are currently tested. In Denmark are mitigation measures in regular use in some fisheries, which have reduced cetacean bycatch significantly.

In discussion of this report, the Working Group noted that there will be mandatory logbook reporting of bycatch for all EU vessels fishing in EU waters, but it was not certain that the same requirement would be made of non-EU vessels. The applicability of observer programs in recording bycatch was also discussed. It was recognized that while observer programs may provide more accurate and less biased data than logbook records, they cannot be applied to many (particularly smaller scale) fisheries and are often very costly. There is some potential for using observers on a sub-sample of certain fisheries to provide correction factors for bias in logbook reports.

4. Review progress in monitoring and management of marine mammal bycatches within the NAMMCO Area

4.1 Progress in monitoring marine mammal bycatches by NAMMCO Member Countries

Mortensen reported that the **Faroe Islands** had distributed questionnaires to boats fishing in Faroese waters to examine a possible bycatch of pinnipeds and cetaceans. Japanese tuna vessels fishing in Faroese waters have Faroese observers on board, and are trained to report marine mammal bycatch.

Mathiasen reported that **Greenland** had taken no new initiatives with regard to marine mammal bycatch. There is mandatory logbook reporting of bycatch but to date no bycatch has been reported.

Ólafsdóttir informed the Working Group that while the reporting of marine mammal bycatch in fishery logbooks has been mandatory in **Iceland** for several years, bycatch has not been reported in practice. In December 2001 a letter was sent to all fishermen using gill nets explaining the requirement for mandatory reporting of marine mammal bycatch and instructing on how such catches should be reported. The results of this initiative are not yet known.

Bjørge reported that the Norwegian Ministry of Fisheries and the Institute of Marine Research (IMR) had together developed a proposal for the monitoring of marine mammal bycatch in **Norway**. The proposal consists of 3 components:

- i. all vessels greater than 13 m in length must report marine mammal bycatch in their logbooks;
- ii. the IMR will receive logbook information from a sub-sample of the fleet and develop statistics on marine mammal bycatch;
- iii. for vessels less than 13 m in length, arrangements will be made with local fisheries authorities to get bycatch data from a sub-sample of the fleet.

This proposal has been out for public hearing and has been accepted by the Norwegian Fisherman's Association. It is expected that the Ministry of Fisheries will make a decision on implementation this year.

4.2 Evaluation of procedures developed and implemented by NAMMCO Member Countries

The Working Group considered that procedures for the monitoring of bycatch in NAMMCO member countries had not yet reached a stage of implementation where an evaluation could be conducted. An evaluation should be considered once the systems are fully functional.

5. Reporting of bycatch to NAMMCO

5.1 Use of National Progress Reports to report bycatch.

The guidelines for the content and format of National Progress Reports were adopted by the Scientific Committee at its fourth meeting, and amended at the ninth meeting of Council to improve catch reporting. In 2000 the Management Committee directed the Secretariat to initiate reporting of bycatch by member countries through the National Progress Reports. Pike reported that he had, in consultation with the Chairman of the Scientific Committee, completed modifications to the Report format to include reporting of bycatch, and presented the revised format to the Committee.

The Working Group found the new format acceptable, and encouraged member countries to utilize the new format to report bycatch to NAMMCO. The Working Group also suggested that the National Progress Reports should contain a brief explanation of how bycatch information was collected, the extent of coverage and the completeness of the data.

5.2 Reporting in 2000.

The revised format was sent out in advance of the Scientific Committee meeting so that bycatch could be reported if information was available. Norway and Greenland did not use the revised format and therefore did not report bycatch. The Faroe Islands used the revised format and did report bycatch, while Iceland used the revised format and reported that bycatch information was not yet available.

The Working Group commended the Faroe Islands for being the first member country to report their bycatch to NAMMCO, and anticipated that other countries would follow suit as their data collection systems were implemented.

6. Recommendations

- i. The Working Group encouraged NAMMCO member countries to report their bycatch to NAMMCO through the new National Progress Report format. Reports should discriminate between no bycatch, and an apparent lack of bycatch because of inadequate monitoring.
- ii. The format of the National Progress Reports should be modified to include a brief explanation of how bycatch information was collected. The explanation should include the methodology used (e.g. log book, observers, questionnaires), the fisheries covered and the extent of the coverage by fishery, and should be adequate for a future evaluation of bycatch monitoring procedures by the Scientific Committee and/or this Working Group.

- iii. The Working Group recommended that Norway continue to report on the "European Initiative" in bycatch monitoring and reduction to NAMMCO through this Working Group.

7. Further meetings

The Working Group considered that a future meeting should be held to evaluate bycatch monitoring procedures in NAMMCO member countries, and the reporting of bycatch to NAMMCO. Given the early stage of development of these activities, the Working Group will consider a face-to-face meeting immediately before the meeting of the Management Committee associated with the 12th meeting of NAMMCO.

Chairman Arne Bjørge noted that he had chaired the Working Group for 3 years, and recommended that the Management Committee appoint a new Chairman to continue the rotation of chairmen between member countries.

8. Acceptance of report.

The Report of the Working Group was accepted by correspondence on 23 January 2002.

Appendix 1 - LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Dr Arne Bjørge (Chairman)
Mr Elling Lorentsen (Norway)
Mr Kim Mathiasen (Greenland)
Mr Bjarni Mikkelsen (Faroe Islands)
Mr Kaj P. Mortensen (Faroe Islands)
Ms Droplaug Ólavsdóttir (Iceland)
Mr Daniel Pike (NAMMCO)
Mr Ólavur Sjúrdarberg (Faroe Islands)
Mr Heðin Weihe (Faroe Islands)

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