

REPORT OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Tromsø, 28 March 1996

1-3. Opening procedures

The Management Committee met at the Radisson SAS Hotel in Tromsø on 28 March, 1996. The meeting was convened by the Committee's Chairman, Einar Lemche (Greenland) and attended by delegations from all member countries. In addition, the Management Committee decided to admit to its meeting all observers who were also attending the Sixth Meeting of the Council. A full list of participants is contained in Appendix 1 of the Report of the Sixth Meeting of the Council.

The draft agenda for the meeting, as contained in Appendix 1, was adopted, and the Secretary, Kate Sanderson, was appointed as rapporteur.

4. Matters arising from the Scientific Committee

The Chairman referred to the decisions and recommendations summarised in NAMMCO/6/6 - Report of the Scientific Committee (pp.1- 4).

The Management Committee noted the decisions made by the Scientific Committee for further work to address outstanding requests for advice from the Council. These included the establishment of a Working Group on Abundance Estimates as a follow-up to NASS-95, which would also coordinate the production of a table showing stock levels and trends in stock levels of marine mammals in the North Atlantic.

The Management Committee also noted the establishment by the Scientific Committee of a Data Group to liaise with the Secretariat on the further development of the database and standards for data submission, storage and handling.

The Management Committee **endorsed** the recommendations for further research on harp seals, hooded seals, ringed seals and grey seals identified by the Scientific Committee, and which are summarised in NAMMCO/6/6, pages 3-4.

4.1 *By-catch data*

The Management Committee noted that the Scientific Committee had identified the need for data on by-catches of marine mammals for population assessment, and had recommended to member countries to establish a system for reporting data on by-catches.

4.2 *Grey seal catch statistics*

The Management Committee further noted the Scientific Committee recommendation for a system for recording catch statistics, both specifically for the hunting of grey seals in Norway, as well as for grey seals killed at fish farms and in fishing gear in all NAMMCO member countries.

The Management Committee **endorsed** the recommendations under 4.1 & 4.2, and **recommended** that the Secretariat be entrusted to investigate the requirements for a standard system for reporting such data, in liaison with the Data Group recently established by the Scientific Committee.

4.3 *North Atlantic Sightings Survey - NASS-95*

The Management Committee noted the successful completion of the North Atlantic Sightings Survey in 1995, and commended the process initiated by the Scientific Committee to conclude the analysis of NASS-95 data. It was expected that the results on abundance will be dealt with by the newly established Scientific Committee Working Group on Abundance Estimates and will be presented at the next annual meeting. It was noted that the Working Group would at least to some extent address last year's request from the Council regarding monitoring of stock levels and trends in stocks. However, it was also noted that one outstanding matter from last year is the request to the Scientific Committee to review results of NASS-95 in the light of recent assessments of North Atlantic whale stocks. It was suggested that this be drawn to the attention of the Scientific Committee to secure a follow-up to last year's request.

4.4 Harbour porpoise

The Management Committee **endorsed** the Scientific Committee's recommendation to include harbour porpoise on its agenda in the future.

5. Proposals for conservation and management

5.1 Earlier proposals

Atlantic walrus

At its last meeting in Nuuk in 1995, the Management Committee recommended: "[W]hile recognizing the over all priority of further work to clarify and confirm the delineation and abundance of walrus stocks in the North Atlantic area, ...that Greenland take appropriate steps to arrest the decline of walrus along its west coast."(NAMMCO Annual Report, p. 49).

Greenland reported that the Home Rule Government had implemented new legislation in 1994 limiting the number of people permitted to hunt walruses in Greenland. Only full-time hunters were permitted to hunt walruses, and only from vessels under 40 gross tons. All catches must be reported to the authorities. It is also forbidden to catch walruses in certain areas of Greenland. Greenland authorities were also considering how to further limit the take of walruses.

Greenland further informed the Management Committee that the question of Atlantic walrus was raised at the last meeting of the Joint Commission on Conservation and Management of Narwhal and Beluga to consider management in cooperation between Canada and Greenland on the stock of Atlantic walrus in the Davis Strait and nearby areas.

It was also reported that a scientific project on DNA analysis of walrus stocks in West and East Greenland was planned for the summer of 1996, and DNA analyses would be exchanged with Canadian scientists.

5.2 New proposals

5.2.1 Ringed seal

At its last meeting in Nuuk in February 1995, the Council agreed to the Management Committee's recommendation for Scientific Committee to:

“advise on stock identity [of ringed seals] for management purposes and to assess abundance in each stock area, long-term effects on stocks by present removals in each stock area, effects of recent environmental changes (i.e. disturbance, pollution) and changes in the food supply, and interactions with other marine living resources.”

The Management Committee noted the conclusions of the Scientific Committee on the subsequent assessment of ringed seals in the North Atlantic, which had been carried out through the Scientific Committee Working Group on Ringed Seals (NAMMCO/6/6, pp. 14-17 & Annex 1). In particular, the Management Committee noted that three geographical areas had been identified for assessing the

status of ringed seals, and that abundance estimates were only available for Area 1 (defined by Baffin Bay, Davis Strait, eastern Hudson Strait, Labrador Sea, Lancaster, Jones and Smith sounds - see NAMMCO/6/6- Annex 1, Figure 1).

While recognising the necessity for further monitoring of ringed seal removals in Area 1, the Management Committee **endorsed** the Scientific Committee's conclusions that present removals of ringed seals in Area 1 can be considered sustainable.

5.2.2 Harp and hooded seals

The Management Committee noted the Scientific Committee's review of updated findings on harp seals and hooded seals in the North Atlantic (NAMMCO/6/6, pp. 10-14).

i) Harp seals in the Northwest Atlantic

The Management Committee noted that a new abundance estimate for Northwest Atlantic harp seals of 4.8 million was available, based on a pup production estimate for 1994 of 702,900. The Management Committee also noted the conclusion that the Northwest Atlantic population of harp seals has been growing at a rate of 5% per year since 1990, and that the 1996 population was estimated to be 5.1 million, with a calculated replacement yield of 287,000.

The Management Committee concluded that catch levels of harp seals in Greenland and Canada from 1990 to 1995 were well below the calculated replacement yields in this period.

ii) Hooded seals in the Northwest Atlantic

Noting the Scientific Committee's review of available analyses of hooded seal pup production, which recognised that calculations are dependent on the particular rate of pup mortality used, as well as the harvest regimes, the Management Committee concluded that present catches of hooded seals in the Northwest Atlantic (1990-1995) were below the estimated replacement yields of 22,900 calculated for a harvest of pups only, and 11,800 calculated for a harvest of 1-year and older animals only.

6. Research recommendations

6.1 Role of marine mammals in the ecosystem

The Management Committee noted the general conclusion of the Scientific Committee during its deliberations on the role of marine mammals in the marine ecosystem (NAMMCO/6/6, pp. 8-9). The Scientific Committee had noted that this was a vast field of science, and that in the future it would be preferable to consider more specific questions related to this field.

The Management Committee therefore **recommended** that the Scientific Committee focus its attention on the food consumption of three predators in the North Atlantic: the minke whale, the harp seal and the hooded seal, with a particular emphasis on the study of the potential implications for commercially important fish stocks.

6.2 Sealworm infestation

Aware that the population dynamics of the sealworm (*Pseudoterranova decipiens*) may be influenced by sea temperature, bathymetry, invertebrate and fish fauna, the Management Committee **recommended** that the Scientific Committee review the current state of knowledge with respect to sealworm infestation and to consider the need for comparative studies in the western, central and eastern North Atlantic coastal areas, taking into account the priority topics recommended by the Scientific Committee and its *ad hoc* Working Group on grey seals (NAMMCO/6/6, pp.17-21).

7. Inspection and Observation

7.1 Report of the Third Meeting of the Working Group on Inspection and Observation (NAMMCO/6/MC/3)

The Chairman of the Working Group on Inspection and Observation, Egil Ole Øen (Norway) presented document NAMMCO/6/MC/3, the Report of the Third Meeting of the Working Group on Inspection and Observation, which met in Copenhagen in November 1995.

Øen pointed out that the Working Group on Inspection and Observation had been requested in 1994 to pursue the development of a common inspection scheme for minke whaling in the North Atlantic, and was subsequently requested in 1995 to continue its work on the formulation of a common checklist for inspectors, based on the list of common elements for national inspection schemes which had been identified by the Working Group at its meeting in 1994. The Working Group on Inspection and Observation had also been requested to consider the details of a reciprocal observer scheme between NAMMCO member countries and to further develop these (NAMMCO Annual Report 1995, p. 59).

At its Third Meeting, the Working Group reviewed updated information from member countries on national regulations for the hunting of marine mammals.

The Working Group's detailed deliberations on the formulation of an inspector's checklist, as well as the development of the details a reciprocal observer scheme between NAMMCO member countries, resulted in a draft proposal for Provisions for the Joint NAMMCO Control Scheme for the Hunting of Marine Mammals (NAMMCO/6/MC/4 - see under 7.2). Conclusions of the detailed discussions in the Working Group related to specific elements of inspection and observation are reflected in the explanatory notes attached to the draft Provisions as presented to the Management Committee.

In addition to this, Øen pointed out that the Working Group had agreed at its Third Meeting that two checklists should be developed: a hunter's checklist to be submitted to national authorities; and an inspector's checklist. It was stressed that the development of common checklists would not imply any level of inspection. The inspector's checklist would be used only to the extent inspection is actually carried out.

Øen also drew the attention of the Management Committee to the Working Group's discussions concerning financing of the International Observer Scheme. The Working Group had agreed that the costs of observers should not be paid by the flag state (see also below under 7.2).

7.2 Proposal for a NAMMCO Control Scheme for the Hunting of Marine Mammals (NAMMCO/6/MC/4)

Øen further presented document NAMMCO/6/MC/4 - Draft Provisions for the Joint NAMMCO Control Scheme for the Hunting of Marine Mammals.

Øen informed the Management Committee that the main aim of the Working Group had been to establish a scheme that is both practical and reliable. The purpose of the Joint Control Scheme was to ensure a certain standard in the control systems of member countries and to give NAMMCO the opportunity of monitoring the extent to which national regulations for the management of marine mammals were upheld in member countries. The Working Group agreed that there was a good basis for the coordination of control schemes in NAMMCO member countries.

Ensuring dialogue with, and input from, the relevant hunter's associations in the work of the Group had also been an important consideration. Representatives from a number of national hunters' organisations had taken part in the January 1996 meeting of the Working Group at which the provisions for the Joint NAMMCO Control Scheme had been further developed.

The proposed Control Scheme contained three main sections: A. Common elements for national inspection schemes for coastal whaling in NAMMCO member countries; B. International Observation Scheme; and C. Implementation.

Section A on inspection relates specifically to hunting of whales from vessels equipped with harpoon guns. According to the Scheme, the definition of whaling operations also includes landing and receiving of whales and whale products. Further, two distinct forms of whaling operations were specified in the Provisions, referred to in the Danish/Norwegian in which the Provisions were developed as “hjemmefangst”(literally “home whaling”) - whaling from vessels which bring their catch fresh to land, and “utefangst”(“out whaling”) - whaling where the whale is flensed on board vessels which are equipped to handle and store the meat and blubber either frozen or chilled with ice, or preserved by other means, in connection with transport/storage.

Øen pointed out that the Working Group had not reached full agreement on the question of the transfer of electronic information from whaling vessels to national authorities, in particular the requirements for report of activity and termination of activity during the whaling season, although it was agreed that it would be possible to find solutions to these requirements in the proposed Scheme.

Section B - the International Observation Scheme - would encompass the hunting of all species of marine mammals in the NAMMCO area. The Scheme provides for the exchange of observers between member countries, according to guidelines determined by the Management Committee, and administered by the Secretariat. Observers, who report on their observations to other member countries through the NAMMCO Secretariat, shall not have any authority to interfere in any way with the observed activities in the applicable areas.

Section C of the proposed Scheme concerns implementation. The Working Group considered that the Scheme could be implemented by the hunting season of 1997. Before then, however, the Scheme or parts of it could be implemented on a trial basis, which might also reveal any necessary adjustments before its final implementation.

The Working Group identified two outstanding questions in connection with the development of the Control Scheme: 1) clarification of the type of electronic reports to be included in the common elements for national inspection schemes, and 2) the development of further guidelines in accordance with the provisions of the Scheme. Finally, the Working Group recommended that the necessary steps be taken to finalise and implement the Joint Control Scheme for the Hunting of Marine Mammals.

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The Chairman of the Management Committee thanked Øen for his presentation and commended the Working Group and the Secretariat for their effective work in the preparation of the proposed Control Scheme. General comments were invited from member countries.

Iceland expressed its support for the Scheme and commended the Chairman of the Working Group for his work. Further, Iceland pointed out that the Working Group on Finance and Administration had noted that a Joint Control Scheme administered through NAMMCO would likely have budgetary implications for the organisation, although it was noted that this had not been taken into account in the 1997 forecast budget.

Norway commended the rapid progress and substantive results made by the Working Group on Inspection and Observation, in contrast to the difficulties and delays experienced with similar questions elsewhere. The importance of taking the practical realities of hunting operations as a starting point was stressed.

The Faroes welcomed the report and work of the Working Group, and expressed support for both sections of the proposed Scheme, the common elements of inspection for coastal whaling as well as the International Observation Scheme for all marine mammals. The need for further guidelines was noted, and the Faroes expressed their willingness to continue with the work in 1996 to further develop these.

Greenland also expressed its gratitude to the Working Group and Secretariat for the progress made in developing the Joint Control Scheme, and otherwise supported the comments by Norway. It was further stressed that Greenland could support the Scheme in principle, but that there were some practical problems associated with it which had been discussed in Greenland.

In particular, Greenland informed the Management Committee of its reservation to the requirement for the report of commencement of activity and report of termination of activity, as specified in article A.2.2, points i) and iii) of the Provisions for a Joint NAMMCO Control Scheme. As Greenlandic whaling vessels are usually equipped with hunting gear all year round, due to the fact that the small individual whaling quotas for each vessel may be taken at almost any time of the year, the requirement for report of commencement and termination of activities was considered to be impractical in relation to the scope of activities of these vessels. Whaling vessels in Greenland will, however, be subject to inspection at all times when the vessel is equipped with a harpoon gun, in accordance with the Joint Control Scheme, during which period the logbook must be kept updated.

A number of specific amendments to the draft Provisions as presented in NAMMCO/6/MC/4 were agreed upon by the Management Committee. These were incorporated into the text of the revised set of Provisions (NAMMCO/6/MC/5), and the rationale for these amendments is subsequently reflected in the explanatory notes to the revised provisions.

The Management Committee **agreed to recommend** to the Council that the Provisions for the Joint Control Scheme for the Hunting of Marine Mammals, as revised by the Management Committee and contained in NAMMCO/6/MC/5, be adopted, noting the reservation by Greenland to article A.2.2, points i) and iii).

7.3 *Other matters*

Greenland requested the Secretariat to define clearly the respective duties, in relation to the Control Scheme, of: 1) the national authorities; 2) the hunters; and 3) the Secretariat.

8. Election of officials

Einar Lemche (Greenland) was re-elected Chairman of the Management Committee for the next two years. Kaj Mortensen (Faroe Islands) was elected as Vice-Chairman.

9. Closing arrangements

Norway thanked the Chairman of the Management Committee for his excellent work in chairing the meeting.

A preliminary report from the Management Committee was prepared for immediate presentation to the Council. The Management Committee agreed that the full report of the meeting should be circulated for review and adoption through correspondence. This process was completed on 6 May 1996.

10. List of documents

NAMMCO/6/6 Scientific Committee - Report of the Fourth Meeting

- NAMMCO/6/MC/3 Report of the Third Meeting of the Working Group on Inspection and Observation
- NAMMCO/6/MC/4 Draft provisions for the Joint NAMMCO Control Scheme for the Hunting of Marine Mammals
- NAMMCO/6/MC/5 Provisions for the Joint NAMMCO Control Scheme for the Hunting of Marine Mammals (as revised by the Management Committee and adopted by the Council)

References

NAMMCO Annual Report 1995, North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission, Tromsø.

NAMMCO Management Committee
Tromsø, 28 March 1996

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