

2.1

MEETING OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE FOR CETACEANS

28 February 2007, Tromsø, Norway

1.-3. CHAIRMAN'S OPENING REMARKS

The Chair of the Management Committee, Halvard P. Johansen, welcomed delegations and observers to the meeting. Participants to the meeting are listed in Section 3.1 of this volume. The agenda, as contained in Appendix 1, was adopted. Documents available to the meeting are listed in Appendix 2. The Secretariat was appointed as rapporteur for the meeting.

4. NATIONAL PROGRESS REPORTS

National Progress Reports for the year 2005 (Section 5, Volume II) were available from the Faroe Islands, Greenland, Iceland and Norway. Progress Reports were provided by Canada and the Russian Federation and brought to the Management Committee as information items. The Management Committee expressed its appreciation to Canada and the Russian Federation for providing reports.

Due to the fact that there are now 2 management committees in the NAMMCO system, it was recommended that in the future the National Progress Reports should be submitted to the Council.

5. RULES OF PROCEDURE

Now that two management committees exist it was considered necessary to change the name of the present Management Committee to the "Management Committee for Cetaceans". This may require some minor changes to the Rules of Procedure, but it was agreed that one set of Rules could apply to both management committees.

6.-8. STATUS OF PAST REQUESTS TO THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE, PROPOSALS FOR CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT, AND NEW PROPOSALS FOR CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT, REQUESTS FOR ADVICE FROM THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

Marine mammal – fisheries interactions

The Management Committee noted the long-standing requests to the Scientific Committee in this area, and the conclusion of the Scientific Committee that no further progress was likely unless more resources were dedicated to modelling efforts already begun in Iceland and Norway, and to gathering the data necessary as model input previously identified by the Scientific Committee. In this respect it was noted that the Icelandic Research Programme, which will provide required data on the feeding ecology of minke whales, will be completed this year. The Management Committee

Report of the Management Committee for Cetaceans

therefore **agreed to recommend** that the Scientific Committee review the results of the Icelandic programme on the feeding ecology of minke whales and multispecies modelling as soon as these become available.

Fin whales

The Management Committee **noted** the conclusion of the Scientific Committee that there was no reason to change their previous conclusion that a catch of 150 whales from the West Iceland sub-stock would be sustainable, and considered that this should conclude the SC's work on the EGI stock until new information becomes available. The recommendations for research made by the Scientific Committee (see Section 4, volume II) were also accepted. It was noted that the IWC Scientific Committee will be continuing with its "pre-implementation assessment" of EGI fin whales, and that the two Scientific Committees had agreed to exchange information on this matter. It was anticipated that the pre-implementation assessment would be completed within 2 years, at which time the NAMMCO Scientific Committee will revise its assessment in light of the new information.

The Management Committee **noted** that it had previously asked that the Scientific Committee continue with its assessments of fin whale stocks in the areas of interest to NAMMCO countries with existing and new information on abundance and stock delineation as it becomes available, and **endorsed** the plan of the Scientific Committee to complete an assessment for the Northeast Atlantic stocks as a next step in this process.

Humpback whales

In 2004 the Scientific Committee was requested to continue its assessment of humpback whale stocks in the North Atlantic, assessing the long-term effects of annual removals of 0, 2, 5, 10 and 20 whales for West Greenland, and providing estimates of sustainable yield for other stocks. In all cases the management objective would be to maintain the stocks at a stable level. Last year the Committee decided to postpone the provision of advice for West Greenland until a new abundance estimate was available, and to delay the assessment in other areas until after the completion of the NASS-2007 survey.

This year new abundance estimates for West Greenland were available from surveys conducted in 2005. The Management Committee **accepted** the conclusion of the Scientific Committee that a removal (including by-catch) of up to 10 animals per year in West Greenland would not harm the stock in the short or medium term. The Management Committee therefore **proposed** that Greenland limit annual removals of humpback whales, including by-caught and struck and lost whales, to 10 off West Greenland. Noting that further information on abundance should be available after the completion of the TNASS, the Management Committee **recommended** that the Scientific Committee conduct a formal assessment at that time. In addition the Management Committee **recommended** that the Scientific Committee investigate the relationship between the humpback whales summering in West Greenland and other areas and incorporate this knowledge into their estimate of sustainable yields of West Greenland humpback whales.

Narwhals

Norway, Iceland and the Faroes **shared the concern** expressed by the Scientific Committee, that the narwhal quota for West Greenland remained well above the recommended level of 135 and that the quota had increased since it was introduced in 2004. It was also noted in this respect that the JCNB in 2006 had expressed grave concern at the status of this stock, and recommended the development of a workplan with a time frame for the reduction in total removals of narwhal to the recommended level.

The Minister of Fisheries for Greenland responded that decisions regarding catch limitations are taken with consideration of the views of scientists and hunters, and that in this case the two groups have a very different perception of the status of the stock. Narwhal are seasonally abundant in some areas and it has proven difficult up to now to reach a consensus between scientists and hunters on stock status. Hunting is very important to the culture and economy of Greenland. The minister also stated that belugas and narwhals consume Greenland halibut and disturb the fisheries.

Jessen added that, in order to avoid inflicting undue hardship on hunting families, Greenland has opted for a gradual reduction of quotas, with the aim of reaching recommended sustainable levels. Greenland has also developed a monitoring and survey plan to obtain better information on the status of beluga, narwhal and walrus, for which funding is being sought. In addition Greenland is developing a multi-year management plan for narwhal.

The Management Committee **welcomed** the development of a monitoring plan by Greenland and encouraged its implementation. It was noted in this respect that narwhal surveys are planned for Melville Bay and Inglefield Bredning in summer 2007, and the Management Committee **supported** the recommendation of the Scientific Committee that plans for these surveys should be reviewed by the TNASS Planning Committee at their next meeting. The Management Committee also **reiterated its recommendation** from last year that surveys should be planned with the input and involvement of hunters.

In conclusion the Management Committee **reiterated the serious concern** expressed in previous years, that present takes of narwhal in West Greenland, according to the advice of both the NAMMCO Scientific Committee and the JCNB Scientific Working Group, are not sustainable and will lead to further depletion of the stock. While accepting that there remains considerable disagreement between scientists and hunters with regard to the status of the stocks, it was nevertheless considered advisable to manage in a precautionary manner in the face of such uncertainty. The Management Committee therefore once again **strongly urged** the JCNB and the Government of Greenland to take action to bring the removals of narwhals in West Greenland to sustainable levels as quickly as possible.

Belugas

The Management Committee noted the concern of the Scientific Committee that the quota for West Greenland beluga remained above the recommended level of 100, at

Report of the Management Committee for Cetaceans

140 annually. In this respect the conclusion of the JCNB from their meeting in 2006, that the population is depleted and that further action is required to halt the decline, was also noted. However it was also noted that the quota has been reduced since its introduction in 2004. The Management Committee therefore **commended** Greenland for their management efforts to improve the conservation status of beluga in this area, and **strongly urged** Greenland to continue their efforts to bring the catch to sustainable levels. The Management Committee also **welcomed** the development of the monitoring plan mentioned above for narwhal which also applies to beluga.

Northern bottlenose whales

The Scientific Committee last completed an assessment of northern bottlenose whales in 1995. Abundance surveys have been carried out since that time, however these do not provide a reliable basis for the estimation of total abundance as visual survey methods are not effective for this deep diving species. In this respect it was noted that the incorporation of an acoustic component to the TNASS could potentially provide information to improve estimates of abundance for this and other deep diving species over a very broad area. This sub-project would involve the purchase of equipment as well as funding for analyses, which can be costly. However this component of the TNASS remains unfunded at this time. The Management Committee, noting the potential value of acoustic data for the estimation of abundance of this and other species, **recommended** that further efforts be made to fund this component of the TNASS.

Killer whales

In 2004 the Management Committee requested the Scientific Committee to review the knowledge on the abundance, stock structure, migration and feeding ecology of killer whales in the North Atlantic. The Management Committee noted the conclusion of the Scientific Committee that, while considerable progress will likely be made in the next few years the information was still not sufficient to conduct the requested assessment.

Pilot whales

The Management Committee noted that it has been over 10 years since the Scientific Committee concluded its assessment of pilot whales. It was recommended at that time that a monitoring programme for pilot whales caught in the Faroes drive hunt be implemented. The Management Committee noted that such a monitoring programme had not yet been implemented, but that *ad hoc* sampling has been undertaken. Satellite tracking of pilot whales has also been carried out in the Faroes in recent years and there are plans for further tagging in the near future.

In addition the Management Committee noted that the last two sightings surveys (NASS 1995 and NASS 2001) had not had coverage that was sufficient to provide an updated abundance estimate for pilot whales in the North Atlantic, and the best available estimate remained the estimate based on the 1987 and 1989 surveys

Noting the comprehensive international scientific research sampling of all pilot whales caught in the Faroes from 1986 to 1988, the Management Committee underlined the value of building on and updating this valuable information by ensuring on-going

sampling of pilot whales in the Faroes. The Management Committee **agreed to recommend** that the Scientific Committee be requested to develop a proposal for the details of a cost-effective scientific monitoring programme for pilot whales in the Faroes.

The Management Committee further noted that TNASS in 2007 was expected to provide a better basis for an updated abundance estimate for pilot whales in the North Atlantic and **agreed to recommend** that both the methodology and the coverage of TNASS take into account the need for reliable estimates for pilot whales. In addition priority should be given to the analysis of data on pilot whales after the completion of TNASS.

Dolphins (white-sided, white-beaked and bottlenose)

The Scientific Committee has been working under a long-standing request, dating from 1998, to provide an assessment for white-sided, white-beaked and bottlenose dolphins in the North Atlantic, including direct and indirect interactions with fisheries. The Management Committee noted the conclusion of the Scientific Committee that there was still insufficient information to initiate the assessment at this time, but that this may become feasible as soon as 2008.

Harbour porpoises

In 1999 the Scientific Committee provided a general North Atlantic-wide assessment for this species through the device of an international conference, which later led to the publication of a volume of *NAMMCO Scientific Publications* on harbour porpoises. However this assessment was very general in nature and did not provide specific advice on sustainable harvest levels for most areas. This year the Scientific Committee noted the urgent need for estimates of abundance from all areas other than that covered by SCANS-II. The TNASS survey may provide an estimate for the area around Iceland but will not do so for other areas, as specialized methodology and coverage of fiord areas are required for this species. While records of recent directed catch are available from Greenland, there is no reliable estimate of by-catch from Iceland or Norway, although it may be considerable in these areas. Thus there is not a sufficient information base to provide advice on sustainable removals for this species for any of the NAMMCO member countries.

Noting this, the Management Committee **recommended** that member countries conduct surveys to produce reliable estimates of abundance for harbour porpoises in their areas. In addition the Management Committee **recommended** that member countries provide reliable estimates of total removals, including by-catch, for this species. Once this information is available for any area, the sustainability of removals can be assessed by the Scientific Committee. This was considered particularly urgent for Greenland, where directed catches are in the low thousands annually.

Sei whales

Sei whales have not been harvested in any area of the North Atlantic since the 1980's. Although some estimates of abundance are available from the NASS, with the exception of the 1989 survey, they did not have an appropriate seasonal/spatial

Report of the Management Committee for Cetaceans

coverage for this species. The Management Committee **agreed to recommend** that the Scientific Committee investigate the status of sei whales in East and West Greenland waters, and provide estimates of sustainable yield.

TNASS

The Management Committee **commended** the effort made by the Committee in the planning of TNASS and was very pleased to see that such a broad international participation and coordination had been sought and achieved. It was particularly pleased to note the active participation of Greenland, Canada and Russia, thus allowing for the first time a trans-Atlantic coverage. The coordination with the American SNESSA survey and the European CODA survey were also much appreciated and represented a welcome step forward in terms of whale conservation.

The Management Committee **requested** the Committee to continue their diligent planning of TNASS, taking care to ensure that the coverage of the survey and the methodology would be adequate for obtaining reliable data for the main target species - fin, minke and pilot whales - while accommodating at the same time the need for estimates for the harbour porpoise, especially in Icelandic waters.

While recognizing national priorities, the Management Committee **recommended** that NAMMCO countries make every effort possible to ensure the coordination of the survey in terms of timing and coverage (spatial contiguity). The Management Committee also recommended that member countries assist the Committee in obtaining additional funding to support the TNASS Extension and Acoustic subprojects.

Once the survey has been completed, the Management Committee **agreed to recommend** that the Scientific Committee develop estimates of abundance and trends as soon as possible, with the primary target species (fin, minke and pilot whales) as a first priority, and secondary target species as a 2nd priority.

9. REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP ON BY-CATCH

The Working Group held a teleconference on 13 February 2007, and the Report from the meeting is included in Section 2, Annex 3.

Norway reported on progress in monitoring by-catch in selected Norwegian fisheries. Pilot studies initiated 2004 revealed the possibility of high by-catches of marine mammals (in particular grey and harbour seals and harbour porpoises) in three coastal gillnet fisheries. Based on this pilot study, a programme to monitor by-catches of marine mammals was developed for fisheries for cod and anglerfish starting in October 2005. A workshop is scheduled for March 2007 to evaluate results of the first 12 months of by-catch monitoring. The aim is to establish methods for extrapolating from observed by-catches to estimates of total by-catches in entire fisheries. The Working Group **recommended** that Norway provide the report of the March evaluation meeting to the NAMMCO Scientific Committee at their next meeting, and provide estimates of by-catch from these fisheries to NAMMCO as soon as they

become available.

There has been no further progress in developing programmes to monitor by-catch in other NAMMCO member countries. The Faroes plans to conduct a questionnaire survey of fishermen to gather basic information about the magnitude of marine mammal by-catch in various fisheries later this year, and this plan was supported by the Working Group as a useful first step. The Working Group noted that recommendations for improving the Icelandic monitoring programme were accepted by Iceland (NAMMCO 2005c, p. 25), but there has been no progress in implementing them. The Working Group **reiterated its previous recommendations** and encouraged Iceland to implement these recommendations in a timely fashion.

In 2004 the Management Committee recommended that member countries should prepare working documents outlining the existing knowledge about marine mammal by-catch in their jurisdiction, for the consideration of the Working Group on By-catch. These documents would be evaluated by the Working Group and used to develop recommendations and priorities for by-catch monitoring in member countries. To date documents from Iceland, the Faroes and Norway have been evaluated, but full documentation has not yet been received from Greenland. Unfortunately this material had not yet been prepared because of competing priorities. The Working Group **recommended** the completion of this documentation for the next meeting.

Last year the Council then suggested that it might be more appropriate if advice on by-catch monitoring systems was provided by the Scientific Committee, and agreed that the Management Committee would consider this in 2007. The Working Group agreed to assist with this process by specifying what scientific advice was required in this area, in the form of a request for advice that could be conveyed to the Scientific Committee (see Annex 3).

The Management Committee **commended** the Working Group for their valuable and efficient work, and **supported** the recommendations put forward in their report (Annex 3).

Last year the Council suggested that it might be more appropriate if advice on by-catch was provided by the Scientific Committee, and agreed that the Management Committee would consider this in 2007. The Management Committee **agreed** that the design of monitoring programmes that will provide accurate and precise estimates of by-catch is in the main a scientific issue, and that such advice could therefore be provided by the Scientific Committee. It was also considered that the Scientific Committee would have better access to the expertise necessary to provide such advice. The Management Committee therefore **agreed to recommend** that the following request be given to the Scientific Committee, as recommended by the Working Group:

By-catch of marine mammals occurs to an unknown extent in fisheries in NAMMCO member countries and may constitute a large proportion of human removals for some species in some areas. At present no NAMMCO member country has a by-catch monitoring programme that can deliver quantitative

Report of the Management Committee for Cetaceans

estimates of by-catch, with associated uncertainty. Work is under way in Norway and Iceland to develop monitoring systems for some fisheries. Therefore there is potentially much to gain from learning from the experiences of other jurisdictions where monitoring programmes are more developed and obtaining scientific advice on the design of a monitoring programme that will satisfy the needs of management. It is recognized that monitoring systems must be tailored to the specific fisheries and the conditions prevalent in different jurisdictions.

The Scientific Committee is therefore requested to:

- 1. Review by-catch monitoring systems used in other jurisdictions and various types of fisheries, and provide advice on the most effective systems in terms of delivering accurate and precise estimates of by-catch at reasonable cost;*
- 2. Review information on fisheries and by-catch in NAMMCO member countries to determine which fisheries are likely to catch the greatest number of marine mammals and/or negatively affect the conservation status of marine mammal stocks;*
- 3. Provide recommendations specific to country and fishery for monitoring by-catch in NAMMCO member countries;*
- 4. On an ongoing basis, review the by-catch monitoring programmes in place in member countries and provide advice on how they can be improved.*

The Management Committee also agreed to disband the standing Working Group on By-catch, as its role would now be fulfilled by the Scientific Committee. The Management Committee thanked the members of the Working Group for their valuable contributions.

10. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE JOINT NAMMCO CONTROL SCHEME

Ole Heinrich chair of the Management Sub-Committee on Inspection and Observation presented the report NAMMCO/16/MC/6.

The Committee had held one meeting in February 2007 discussing a possible revision of the text of the provisions. The situation with observers going out at sea is not sufficiently covered in the present provisions with regards to safety issues, and the Committee recommended a revision of the text of the provisions to take into account this aspect. The Committee saw a clear need to differentiate between requirements for training in survival and safety/security.

The Management Committee **agreed** that the provisions of the Scheme should be amended to integrate requirements for observer training to ensure observer safety onboard vessels, and to take account of recent technological developments in automated monitoring. In addition the provisions should be modified to support it reporting to the Council rather than the Management Committee.

10.1 NAMMCO International Observation Scheme 2006

Charlotte Winsnes presented the report of the NAMMCO International Observation Scheme for the hunting of marine mammals for the 2006 season (NAMMCO/16/MC/7) prepared by the Secretariat.

The implementation of the observation scheme went according to the provisions and the approved scope and range of the observation activities for 2006 were whaling in Greenland and Norway. However due to unforeseen events observation took place only in Greenland.

Observations were carried out from 15 July to 11 August in Nuuk and in Sisimiut. Both land based and out at sea observations took place, among them one successful minke whale hunt and several unsuccessful minke whale and fin whale hunts. The observer found that he could carry out his observations in accordance with the provisions of the Scheme and no infringements were observed.

10.2 NAMMCO International Observation Scheme 2007

The Secretariat had initially proposed whaling in Iceland as the scope for the Observation Scheme in 2007. However, in light of the decision under item 10. above the Management Committee was asked to agree to change the scope to whaling in the Faroes.

The Management Committee **approved** that the scope and range of the Observation Scheme for 2007 would be whaling in the Faroes.

10.3 Other matters

Greenland requested that the Sub-Committee provide a report on experience in using automated monitoring of whale hunting in Norway for next year's meeting.

11. USER KNOWLEDGE IN MANAGEMENT DECISION-MAKING

Last year the Management Committee re-established the Working Group on User Knowledge in Management and provided new Terms of Reference for the Group. However the Committee had not met and no progress has been made. The Management Committee reaffirmed the importance of this issue, and considered that the process might be facilitated by focussing on a few key species at first. The Management Committee therefore **recommended** that the Working Group focus narwhal and beluga in the near term. It was also noted that this Working Group will report to the Council henceforth.

12. REPORT OF THE AD HOC WORKING GROUP ON ENHANCING ECOSYSTEM-BASED MANAGEMENT

Last year the Management Committee recommended that the *Ad hoc* Working Group should continue and meet inter-sessionally, and contact other bodies dealing with marine resource and fisheries management in order to consider EBM approaches in marine mammal management and develop a checklist as recommended. The

Report of the Management Committee for Cetaceans

Management Committee noted that the Working Group had not met and no progress had been made in its assigned tasks. The Management Committee therefore **recommended** that the Working Group meet this year, and noted that it will be reporting to the Council henceforth. Nevertheless this item, which is of course of interest in a management context, will remain on the agenda of the Management Committees.

This year, the FAO will be holding a scientific workshop on ecosystem modelling. NAMMCO has agreed to fund the participation of an observer in this workshop.

Noting the conclusion of the Scientific Committee that no further progress was likely in this area unless more resources were dedicated to modelling efforts already begun in Iceland and Norway, and to gathering the data necessary as model input, the Management Committee **recommended** that these activities be a priority for member countries.

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

14. ACCEPTANCE OF REPORT

A draft report containing all important items of discussion was presented to the Council on 1 March 2007. The final version was accepted by correspondence.

Appendix 1 -AGENDA

1. Chairman's opening remarks
2. Adoption of agenda
3. Appointment of rapporteur
4. National Progress Report
5. Rules of Procedure
6. Status of past proposals for conservation and management
7. Status of past requests to the Scientific Committee
8. New proposals for conservation and management, requests for advice from the Scientific Committee and recommendations for scientific research.
9. Report of the Working Group on By-catch
10. Implementation of the Joint NAMMCO Control Scheme
 - 10.1 NAMMCO International Observation Scheme 2006
 - 10.2 NAMMCO International Observation Scheme 2007
 - 10.3 Other matters
11. User Knowledge in Management Decision-Making
12. Report of the *ad hoc* Working Group on Enhancing Ecosystem-Based Management
13. Any other business
14. Adoption of report

Appendix 2 - LIST OF DOCUMENTS

NAMMCO/16/MC/1	List of Documents
NAMMCO/16/MC/2	Agenda 2
NAMMCO/16/MC/3	Status of past proposals for conservation and management - cetaceans
NAMMCO/16/MC/4	Summary of active requests by NAMMCO Council to the Scientific Committee, and responses by the Scientific Committee - cetaceans
NAMMCO/16/MC/5	Report of the Working Group on By-catch
NAMMCO/16/MC/6	Report of the Sub-Committee on Inspection and Observation
NAMMCO/16/MC/7	Implementation of the Joint NAMMCO Control Scheme
NAMMCO/16/MC/8	Rules of Procedure

National Progress Reports:

NAMMCO/16/MC/NPR-F	Faroe Islands 2005
NAMMCO/16/MC/NPR-G	Greenland 2005
NAMMCO/16/MC/NPR-I	Iceland 2005
NAMMCO/16/MC/NPR-N	Norway 2005
NAMMCO/16/MC/NPR-C	Canada 2005
NAMMCO/16/MC/NPR-R	Russian Federation 2005

NAMMCO/16/5 Report of the Scientific Committee