

NAMMCO



# JOINT MEETING OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES

*24 March 2021  
Online*

**REPORT**

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## 1. CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS

The Chair of the Joint Meeting of the Management Committees (MCJ), Guro Gjelsvik (NO), welcomed participants to the meeting (see Appendix 1 for the list of participants) and noted that Fern Wickson from the NAMMCO Secretariat would act as rapporteur.

The Chair noted that all the meeting documents had been made available on the NAMMCO website two weeks prior to the meeting. The list of meeting documents is available in Appendix 2 of this report. The Chair drew particular attention to the following documents as relevant for all agenda items:

*NAMMCO/28/MC/05: List of Proposals for Conservation and Management and Recommendations for Research, with Responses from the Parties.*

*NAMMCO/28/MC/06: List of Active Requests from the NAMMCO Council to the Scientific Committee, with Responses from the Scientific Committee.*

The Chair noted that prior to the meeting, Member Countries were invited to submit updates in writing on advances towards the implementation of previous proposals for conservation and management and recommendations for research.

The Chair noted that this joint meeting addresses issues of relevance to both the Management Committee for Cetaceans (MCC) and the Management Committee for Seals and Walrus (MCSW) and would focus on:

- a) Considering new proposals for conservation and management and recommendations for research (with implications for the Member Countries) made by the Scientific Committee during their meetings in 2019 and 2021,
- b) Determining whether any requests for advice may be considered completed and closed,
- c) Discussing issues related to User Knowledge within NAMMCO.

## 2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

The Chair proposed that a new item be added to the agenda to follow up on the meeting of the MCJ from February 2021 and the proposal from that meeting to develop a draft request for advice related to operationalising the precautionary approach to management. The MCJ agreed that this issue could be added as a new agenda item 3.5. With this change, the agenda was adopted and is available as Appendix 3 of this report.

## 3. WORK PROCEDURES IN NAMMCO

### 3.1 STRUCK AND LOST

#### 3.1.1 Requests for Advice Considered Answered by the SC

**Request R-1.6.4:** *To provide advice on the best methods for collection of the desired statistics on losses, as SC recommended that catch statistics include correction for struck but lost animals for different seasons, areas, and catch operations.*

SC26 reiterated that it views the best methods for collecting data on struck and lost to include: investing in good time series of surveys and having independent observer programs on selected hunts for different seasons, areas and catch operations. With this response it considered the request to be answered.

The MCJ was satisfied with the answer provided by the SC and **agreed** to recommend to Council that this request now be closed.

## 3.2 REPORTING TO THE NAMMCO DATABASE

SC26 noted that a searchable online catch database is now available on the NAMMCO website and emphasised the importance of Member Countries notifying the Secretariat of any amendments in catch data to ensure that up to date information is always available. SC27 also endorsed a new proposal from the By-catch Working Group (BYCWG) related to reporting to databases.

### 3.2.1 New Proposals for Conservation and Management

*- Member Countries inform the NAMMCO Secretariat of any and all revisions of catch statistics taking place at a national level (e.g., revisions of historical data or revisions after submission of national progress reports).*

*- Member Countries validate all data (direct catch, by-catch or other) before submitting it to formal databases and repositories.*

#### Discussion

While it did not oppose the proposals, Greenland wished to note that there had been significant changes in information technology and database systems over the 30 years of NAMMCO's operation. This means that historical catch statistics can be improved, revised and updated over time. Recognising this, Greenland noted that any change in historical catch information would be passed on to NAMMCO.

The MCJ **endorsed** the new proposals for conservation and management.

## 3.3 DEVELOPMENT OF MANAGEMENT ADVICE

### 3.3.1 Requests for Advice Considered Answered by the SC

**Request R-1.6.6:** *To conduct a review of the management procedures used by the Committee for generating management advice (RMP, AWMP, Bayesian assessment, Hitter Fitter, etc). The Committee should advise on which procedure is the most suitable for each species (or category of species) with the data that is currently available, while also meeting the management principles of NAMMCO. The Committee should further advise where additional data could allow for more suitable management procedure(s) to be implemented.*

Chair of the SC, Bjarni Mikkelsen (FO) gave a brief presentation of the SC response to this request for advice. It was noted that SC26 provided a written review (available in full in [section 5.7 of the SC26 report](#)). This review describes the difference between stock assessments and management procedures, outlining key methods of each. In this review, it was noted that the management advice provided by the NAMMCO SC is currently based on a suite of management procedures and assessment models developed and tuned to the knowledge available. The SC agreed that it was appropriate to continue using existing management procedures (e.g., the RMP and AWMP) for those species where they have been implemented. For all other species, it recommended the continued use of stock assessment approaches using population dynamics models for generating advice on sustainable harvest levels. Based on this response, the SC considers its work on this request to be complete.

#### Discussion

Greenland had no objection to closing this request for advice but wished to emphasise that for management purposes, it makes no distinction between aboriginal and other types of hunters as is done within the IWC and believes it is important to not place people in different categories in this way.

The MCJ was satisfied with the answer provided by the SC and **agreed** to recommend to Council that this request could now be closed.

### 3.4 ASSESSMENTS AND ADVICE ON SMALL STOCKS

After reviewing the assessment from the Ad hoc Working Group for narwhal in East Greenland, SC26 recommended that NAMMCO develop guidance on a principle-based approach to generating harvest advice for small stocks. SC27 then noted that this would also be relevant for other species.

#### 3.4.1 New Proposal for Conservation and Management

- NAMMCO develop guidance on a principle-based approach for how to manage and provide harvest advice for small stocks.

The MCJ **endorsed** the new proposal for conservation and management.

### 3.5 OPERATIONALISING NAMMCO'S PRECAUTIONARY APPROACH TO MANAGEMENT

The MCJ recalled that at its last meeting on 18 February 2021, which focused on responding to the Performance Review Working Group, it had recommended that a request be made to the SC to clarify NAMMCO's precautionary approach to management through the development of harvest strategies (including stock-specific reference points and harvest control rules).

As was proposed during that meeting, Norway presented a draft new request for advice for the MCJ's consideration.

The Chair of Council and Chair of the Performance Review Working Group (PRWG), Kate Sanderson (FO), drew the MCJ's attention to the specific wording on this issue used in the PRWG report, where it was stated that "...the PRWG recommended that NAMMCO more clearly define how the precautionary approach is applied in its approaches to conservation and management, in particular in processes for rebuilding depleted stocks. The Joint Management Committee should further discuss and define how this work should proceed, also with the involvement of the Scientific Committee." She suggested that it may be useful to revise the language used in the text of the draft request so that it more closely aligned with that used by the PRWG.

Iceland recalled that setting management objectives and establishing rebuilding plans is always a matter for Member Countries and not NAMMCO as an organization. It emphasised the importance of this being clear in the wording of the new request.

Greenland supported the comments from Iceland and reiterated its comments from the last MCJ meeting that management plans and plans for rebuilding depleted stocks are within the remit of Member Countries rather than NAMMCO. Greenland also noted that in 2018 it had asked the SC for clarification on the criteria used to determine what constitutes a "small stock" and that this issue was important to include in how the meaning of the text on the request was understood. Greenland also asked that any reference to user knowledge in the draft request refer to "hunter and user knowledge".

The MCJ agreed that the draft text on the request would be revised by correspondence based on the comments received and that a new version would be presented to the MCJ at the meeting the following morning to finalise the draft reports.

The final agreed text on the new request was:

*The SC is requested to explain how and at what level the precautionary approach is, or can be, integrated into advice provided by the SC for use in conservation and management, with a particular focus on depleted stocks.*

## 4. MARINE MAMMAL - FISHERIES INTERACTIONS

The MCJ was notified that the FAO has now published its "Guidelines to prevent and reduce bycatch of marine mammals in capture fisheries" as part of its Technical Guidelines for Responsible Fisheries. NAMMCO was involved in helping to draft these guidelines, which were available as for information document NAMMCO/28/MC/FI03.

The MCJ was also informed that the SC has now endorsed marine mammal by-catch estimates from the lump sucker gillnet fishery in Iceland as recommended by the By-catch Working Group (BYCWG) and that the work continues to progress but still needs to be finalised for the cod gillnet fishery in Iceland and for coastal seals in the Norwegian cod and monkfish gillnet fisheries.

#### Discussion

Norway recalled that in the meeting of the Management Committee for Cetaceans (MCC), it had emphasised that there was no need to follow up the SC's recommendation to expand the Coastal Reference Fleet to improve the estimates of harbour porpoise by-catch. It noted that data for estimating by-catch of harbour and grey seals also comes from the Coastal Reference Fleet. However, the reason for the poor reliability of the seal by-catch estimates is primarily misidentification of the involved seal species, and only partly due to a limited amount of data. Since species identification would not be improved by having more vessels in the Reference Fleet, Norway is experimenting with a system for remote electronic monitoring. The prototype developed can operate under high humidity, freezing temperatures and poor light conditions. The system includes two cameras, one monitoring the net with catch and by-catch on the deck, and the other monitoring the nets outside the vessel before they enter the net hauler. This is anticipated to assist in two ways: it will improve the species identification of by-caught marine mammals, and will, for the first time, provide data on animals dropping out of the net before they reach the net hauler. Testing of this equipment on a commercial vessel had been delayed due to Norway's privacy regulations, but the prototype has been modified and permission had now been received to test it in commercial fisheries this spring.

The MCJ was also informed that Norway has conducted successful trials with pingers (i.e., acoustic deterrents) on gillnets and that results of this work will be presented to and discussed by the IWC SC this spring.

### **4.1 NEW PROPOSAL FOR CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT**

*- Since self-reporting is an insufficient basis for quantifying by-catch, additional sources of information (e.g., independent observation) should always be sought.*

#### Discussion

The Faroe Islands highlighted that all vessels have an electronic logbook in which all catch and by-catch is reported. As a general rule, this reporting system is trusted until there is a reason not to trust the information provided. Therefore, other sources of information on by-catch are sought when there is reason to assume that by-catch is higher than what has been reported.

Greenland supported the comments from the Faroe Islands and noted that the reporting systems in Greenland are continuing to improve through advanced information technology (IT) systems. It was also noted that dialogue with the relevant communities regarding catch and by-catch reporting was ongoing. Greenland emphasised that although it had been stated for many years that self-reporting is an insufficient basis for estimating by-catch, it was important to acknowledge that due to improvements in IT systems, self-reporting was also improving over time.

Acknowledging the comments from the Member Countries, the MCJ **endorsed** the new proposal for conservation and management.

## **5. ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES**

### **5.1 MARY RIVER MINE**

The MCJ noted that Canada had been invited to give an update on the Mary River mine project at the Council meeting under agenda item 10, Environmental Issues. A popular summary of phase 2 of the project from Baffinland was also provided as for information document NAMMCO/28/MC/FI04.

The NAMMCO-JCNB Joint Working Group on narwhal and beluga (JWG) had made a new recommendation for research related to the Mary River mine. It was noted that although SC27 had

endorsed this recommendation, it had also asked the JWG to provide clear terms of reference for the workshop at its next meeting.

### 5.1.1 New Recommendation for Research

*- An expert workshop be held to review the impacts of noise disturbance on hunted populations of narwhals, belugas, walrus and seals from shipping connected to the Baffinland mine.*

#### Discussion

Greenland informed the MCJ that they had consulted the Greenland Institute of Natural Resources (GINR) on this issue as researchers at the institute had actively followed the Mary River mine project and its environmental impact assessment. The GINR informed the Ministry of Fisheries, Hunting and Agriculture that the environmental impacts in both international and Canadian waters can have quite large consequences for Greenland as they will significantly affect the populations of narwhals, belugas, bowhead whales, and walruses that live in West Greenland in the winter and which are used by the communities there. None of these stocks are present in large numbers in the waters of West Greenland in the period from July to 15 November, when the mining company's shipping traffic is planned. However, at the beginning and end of this period, animals are potentially vulnerable to impacts along the shipping route in international and Canadian waters, which can have consequences for Greenland.

Following the discussion, the MCJ **endorsed** the new recommendation for research.

## 5.2 OTHER NON-HUNTING RELATED ANTHROPOGENIC STRESSORS

Greenland noted that shipping is an activity that is increasing in all areas of Greenland, including north of Qaanaaq/Thule area and far North East Greenland. This is not only related to the transportation of goods, but also fishing trawlers off shore and near the coast. The number of family boats are also increasing in a large scale. The most problematic issue is seen to be the increasing numbers and sizes of tourist vessels, which are visiting all towns and various isolated areas. Hunters in these remote areas are also experiencing disturbance to their hunting activities. Furthermore, the hunters are very worried about the presence of ships and sailboats in the Scoresby Sound fjord disturbing narwhals, seals, walruses and polar bears. The increasing level of shipping traffic experienced up to 2019 has caused significant frustration. Although the COVID-pandemic has limited the presence of shipping vessels in 2020, it is assumed that a widespread vaccination program will allow the activity to increase again.

The hunter representatives from East Greenland, Åge Hammeken Danielsen and Tobias Ignatiussen, displayed again the slides shown during their presentation in the meeting of the MCC on shipping traffic in East Greenland and its impact on narwhals. It was noted that in the area around Ittoqqortoormiit there was a high level of shipping traffic, particularly from sail boats, tourist ships and cruise vessels. The particularly high level of tourist vessels travelling in the Scoresby Sound fjord system was highlighted and it was noted that there had been a decline in the use of this highly trafficked area by narwhals. It was also stated that although narwhals are normally resting when they are in the fjord system, they clearly hurry to leave the area when ships are present. Narwhals have also been seen moving into fjord systems when supply vessels travel along the coastline towards Ittoqqortoormiit, and returning to their previous areas when the supply ships depart. It was also noted that seals, and particularly harp seals, have been observed moving into new areas around Ittoqqortoormiit where there is less noise disturbance from shipping traffic. In the Tasiilaq area, shipping traffic has also been observed having an effect on narwhals, with them moving into fjord systems to avoid the noise. Furthermore, it was noted that when tourist ships go into the fjords, and drones are used to take pictures, it is obvious that narwhals become stressed.

### 5.2.1 New Proposal for Conservation and Management

In discussing ecosystem-based approaches to management, SC27 noted the difficulties in obtaining reliable information to assess the impact on marine mammals from noise disturbance and made the following recommendation to the NAMMCO parties.



- Member Countries ensure the availability of relevant information from seismic surveys to allow for proper sound estimation to meet research and management needs.

#### Discussion

Norway informed the MCJ that it has initiated a process to manage seismic survey activity to minimise negative impacts on marine mammals. The Ministry of Climate and Environment has instructed the Norwegian Environment Agency to consider the need for controlling seismic survey activity, and to consider if the Pollution Control Act is relevant for implementing such controls.

Norway also noted that all marine mammal species may be hurt by seismic surveys if they are in close proximity to the sound source. Harbour porpoises, dolphins and other species that use high frequency sound for echolocation are particularly vulnerable to hearing damage. Species resident in the high Arctic, such as the bowhead whale and narwhals, seem to be among the most vulnerable to noise disturbance for impacts on their behaviour. It was noted that this supported the information presented by the hunters from East Greenland.

Norway therefore supported the recommendation made by the SC, and particularly now, when shipping and petroleum industries are expanding into the relatively pristine areas of the high Arctic.

Following the presentations and discussion, the MCJ **endorsed** the new proposal for conservation and management.

## 6. USER KNOWLEDGE IN MANAGEMENT DECISION-MAKING

The MCJ was informed that the NAMMCO Secretariat had participated in a project on integrating local knowledge in international management advice (see NAMMCO/28/MC/FI04 for project description). In a workshop for this project held in February 2021, opportunities for strengthening how local and user knowledge are included in the decision-making and advisory processes of NAMMCO were presented and discussed. A summary of this presentation and the suite of options available to NAMMCO for strengthening the presence and role of user knowledge in the organisation was available in working document NAMMCO/28/MC/07 and Scientific Secretary, Fern Wickson, gave a brief presentation outlining the content of this document.

The divergence in scientific and user knowledge in the case of narwhals in East Greenland (as surfaced in the MCC) was highlighted as representing an important opportunity to discuss and continue developing the way NAMMCO includes user knowledge in its advisory and decision-making processes. Noting that user knowledge was a standing item on the MCJ agenda, parties were invited to consider how NAMMCO currently includes user knowledge and discuss whether any additional actions could be worth exploring or having explicated in more detail, and/or the appropriate avenues for discussions on this topic to take place within NAMMCO.

#### Discussion

Greenland thanked the Secretariat for the presentation and expressed its gratitude for the opportunity to also participate in the NORDECO meeting. It emphasised that for the last 5–6 years, there had been clear evidence of a need to improve and structure the collection and use of hunter and user knowledge in relation to the conservation and management of marine mammals. It was noted that the currently imbalanced situation in what type of knowledge is used in advisory and decision-making processes increases the challenges that exist in the relationship between scientists and hunters. The situation also has a severe impact on the management of marine mammals in Greenland and is a cause of frustration in hunter communities, particularly regarding impacts on their meat supply and cultural heritage.

Greenland noted that the scientific knowledge of marine mammal stocks has been steadily improving, and thus improving the management advice in Greenland. The view of Greenland is, however, that the best available knowledge is obtained by combining the two knowledge systems in the decision making process, i.e. combining hunter and user knowledge with scientific data and knowledge. When both

types of knowledge are available, politicians can take final decisions based on the best available information.

Greenland suggested that to address the current situation and imbalance, it was important to focus on collecting and using hunter and user knowledge in a more structured way than is currently done. Hunters and users develop their knowledge of marine mammals based on 24 hour/year-round observations, which is highly valuable and needs to be taken into account in the decision-making process. Therefore, Greenland would like to work towards an increased focus on the organised collection and use of hunter knowledge in decision-making processes in the coming years, also within the context of NAMMCO.

Greenland also informed the MCJ that in the last 2 years, three community consultations on narwhal issues had been carried out - in Ittoqqortoormiit and Tasiilaq in East Greenland, and Qaanaaq in North Greenland. There are also plans to continue these consultations in other municipalities this year. Furthermore, an executive order on the collection and use of hunter and user knowledge was in preparation, which will formalise the development of a more structured approach and thereby hopefully help to balance the information provided to decision-making processes.

Norway agreed that the inclusion of user knowledge is required to ensure that decisions are based on the best available knowledge and that it is critical that local people have an opportunity to be involved in decision-making if management advice is to be followed. Norway therefore supported NAMMCO doing further work to advance on this important topic.

Greenland underlined that it was important to discuss the issue within relevant committees and proposed the MCJ as a relevant arena for further discussions within NAMMCO.

Iceland expressed its support for the positions expressed by Greenland and Norway.

The MCJ **recommended** that further work on this topic be carried out within the MCJ.

## 7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The MCJ agreed that a drafting group be established to revise the draft request discussed under agenda item 3.5 and that this group report back to the MCJ at the meeting to finalise the MC reports.

## 8. CLOSE OF MEETING

The Chair thanked the participants for their attendance and contributions.

The meeting was closed at 14:30 on 24 March 2021.

## 9. ADOPTION OF REPORT

A draft of the report was circulated on 24 March 2021 and was finalised and adopted on 25 March 2021.

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**APPENDIX 2: DOCUMENT LIST****MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES - JOINT LIST OF DOCUMENTS**

<b>Doc. No.</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Agenda</b>
NAMMCO/28/08	Summary: Scientific Committee Reports 2019 & 2021	MCJ, MCC, MCSW
NAMMCO/28/MC/01	Joint List of Documents for the Management Committees	MCJ, MCC, MCSW
NAMMCO/28/MC/02a	Draft Agenda Joint Meeting of the Management Committees (MCJ)	MCJ
NAMMCO/28/MC/02b	Draft Annotated Agenda Joint Meeting of the Management Committees (MCJ)	MCJ
NAMMCO/28/MC/03a	Draft Agenda Management Committee for Seals and Walrus (MCSW)	MCSW
NAMMCO/28/MC/03b	Draft Annotated Agenda Management Committee for Seals and Walrus (MCSW)	MCSW
NAMMCO/28/MC/04a	Draft Agenda Management Committee for Cetaceans (MCC)	MCC
NAMMCO/28/MC/04b	Draft Annotated Agenda Management Committee for Cetaceans (MCC)	MCC
NAMMCO/28/MC/05	List of Proposals for Conservation and Management and Recommendations for Research, with Responses from Parties	MCJ, MCC, MCSW
NAMMCO/28/MC/06	List of Active Requests from the NAMMCO Council to the Scientific Committee, with Responses from the Scientific Committee	MCJ, MCC, MCSW
NAMMCO/28/MC/07	Strengthening User Knowledge in NAMMCO	MCJ
<b>For Information</b>		
NAMMCO/28/MC/FI01	Report from the 27 <sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Scientific Committee - 2021	MCJ, MCC, MCSW
NAMMCO/28/MC/FI02	Report from the 26 <sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Scientific Committee - 2019	MCJ, MCC, MCSW
NAMMCO/28/MC/FI03	FAO (2021). Fishing operations. Guidelines to prevent and reduce bycatch of marine mammals in capture fisheries. FAO Technical Guidelines for Responsible Fisheries No 1, Suppl.4. Rome.	MCJ
NAMMCO/28/MC/FI04	Baffinland (2018). Popular Summary: Mary River Project, Phase 2 Proposal.	MCJ

NAMMCO/28/MC/FI05	Arctic Council (2019). Meaningful Engagement of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities in Marine Activities: Findings for Policy Makers	MCJ
NAMMCO/28/MC/FI06	NORDECO Project Description - Arctic User Knowledge Network: From Local to Global	MCJ
NAMMCO/28/MC/FI07	A. Jessen (2021). Arctic User Knowledge in Practice in Greenland: Presentation at NORDECO project workshop	MCJ



## **APPENDIX 3: AGENDA**

### **AGENDA**

- 1. Chair's Opening Remarks**
- 2. Adoption of Agenda**
- 3. Work Procedures in NAMMCO**
  - 3.1. Struck and lost**
  - 3.2. Reporting to the NAMMCO database**
  - 3.3. Development of management advice**
  - 3.4. Assessments and advice on small stocks**
  - 3.5. Operationalising NAMMCO's precautionary approach to management**
- 4. Marine Mammal – Fisheries Interactions**
- 5. Environmental Issues**
  - 5.1. Mary River mine**
  - 5.2. Other non-hunting related anthropogenic stressors**
- 6. User Knowledge**
- 7. Any Other Business**