

To the Board of the NAMMCO Fund
From the Secretariat

The future of the NAMMCO Fund – alternative approaches

BACKGROUND

The NAMMCO Fund was established by the Council at its Third Meeting in Reykjavik, in July 1993. The purpose of the Fund was to support projects which "contribute to the knowledge and understanding of the rational utilisation of marine mammals" (Article 1 of the Fund Statutes). The Statutes of the NAMMCO Fund were adopted by the Council in 1994 establishing a Board of the Fund with the mandate "to adopt its own working guidelines and make further decisions on the application and operation of the Fund" (Article 5 of the Fund Statutes). The Statutes also state that "if the NAMMCO Fund should be dissolved, the Council shall decide on the use to be made of any balance remaining, in accordance with the aim of the Fund".

Until 1998, the Board had supported a total of 14 projects including the NAMMCO Conference "Sealing the Future". The support was given on an *ad hoc* basis, without having been systematically advertised in member countries or having been subject to any official guidelines and criteria for applicants. In 1998 the Board decided to postpone considerations and funding of new proposals until administrative guidelines and formal requirements for applicants to the Fund had been developed. The new "NAMMCO Fund Policy and Application Procedure" was adopted by the Board and endorsed by the Council in 1999. In addition to reiterating the overall aim of the NAMMCO Fund, the policy and application procedure states very explicit that the target group should be the general public rather than a specialised or technical audience like scientists and managers. The NAMMCO Fund was announced according to the new procedure in early 2000 with the first allocation of support in August 2000.

In 2001 the Council endorsed the recommendation of the Board that in any given year it could solicit special projects and advertise that certain areas of focus were preferred. In the announcement for 2003 it was emphasised that the Board was particularly interested in considering projects that would produce an information book-let on marine mammals in the North Atlantic that would give scientifically accurate species information including historical and current utilisation of marine mammals. This initiative generated no response.

Following a growing concern that the NAMMCO Fund did not produce the intended outcome, the question of the future of the Fund was raised at the Council meeting in 2002 and later reiterated at the Council meeting in 2003. For 2004 the Fund was put on hold and the Board of the NAMMCO Fund was tasked with developing alternative approaches for the Fund to be presented to the Council at its meeting in 2005.

The alternatives being presented below are based on previous discussions with members in the NAMMCO structure and also on internal discussions in the Secretariat. One discussed suggestion not being presented below, is the upgrading and strengthening of the NAMMCO Web site. The reason for not including this alternative is that the Council in 2004 decided to decrease the "normal" FUND allocation with NOK 100 000 and at the same time increase the budget item general information with NOK 100 000 earmarked work on the web site. Due to

various reasons the revision of the web site did not begin in 2004 and as a consequence this money has been transferred to 2005. This means that a smaller allocation for 2005 is perhaps needed, but the major funding of a revision of the web site is already “taken care of” over the general budget in 2004.

ALTERNATIVES

Status Quo

The Fund portfolio represents a variety of projects such as seminars, books, documentary films, brochures, posters, proceedings from conferences, exhibitions, projects/studies and development of web sites. Most of the projects are internationally focused in the sense that the product is set either in one or more "NAMMCO" languages and English, or just in English (some projects are also in German and French). The predominant foci are on sealing and whaling issues related to hunting methods, utilisation and management in the different member countries both historically and in a contemporary frame. For detailed information on substance please see the document NAMMCO Fund – 2005/2 Project Overview and update.

Since the adoption of the Fund Policy and Application Procedure and the “first” allocation of support adhering to this procedure in 2000, 13 projects have been granted support of which 3 have later been withdrawn. As of December 2004, 4 projects were still not finalised, of which 2 probably never will be.

It is a general feeling that a relatively large amount of time and effort both by the Secretariat and others is not giving the anticipated results. The main reasons for this are:

- a majority of the projects have been unable to finalise within the anticipated time frame. (of the total 13 projects, 9 were not finalised by June 2004, some being nearly 3 years delayed) As a result of the delays a lot of time has been spent on following-up the projects,
- to secure that the information in a given project is scientifically adequate members of the NAMMCO Scientific Committee have been used as consultants. This has proven to be very time consuming for the persons involved, and therefore not a feasible solution in the future.

Another, perhaps more important issue for consideration, is that the number of applicants have been decreasing the last years making the pool of proposals to choose from small. Furthermore, the quality of incoming proposals varies a lot. The Fund criteria have no reference to quality qualifications, and as the projects by nature are not scientific it is more difficult to find clear-cut criteria to judge them by.

Yearly newsletter

To produce a newsletter giving highlights from ongoing work in NAMMCO aimed at the general public. An example would be the ICES CIEM newsletter which is published several times a year. The publication should be sent in the mail and also be available on the internet. This option requires that people in the NAMMCO network provide input in the form of written articles etc. Although different in nature, experiences from the NAMMCO Scientific Publication Series do not favour this proposal. It has proven very difficult to get people to contribute with written text. To do this in a non-scientific or technical manner will probably represent an additional workload.

The NAMMCO Prize

To establish a prize/stipend to be awarded to one person or project of outstanding qualities.

The idea is for the price to be in the area of NOK 50 000. Such a prize would require a formal procedure on how to nominate candidates and a set of formal criteria by which a candidate is chosen. It will furthermore be necessary to have a Committee tasked with the objective to find and appoint the successful candidate.

A clear advantage with such a grant is the opportunity for exposure in the media. A disadvantage is obviously that the process requires a substantial amount of work both by the Secretariat and the Committee responsible for identifying a successful candidate.

Travel support to conferences/meetings

To establish a travel grant for students to attend international meetings with a relevance to NAMMCO issues. The meetings/conferences in question may either be predefined or left open at the discretion of the applicant. The grant would be restricted to graduate students studying issues of interest to NAMMCO. By keeping the objective broad the idea is to “force” the candidates to look into/ investigate what NAMMCO is all about.

To simplify matters the grant could be set at a prefixed level i.e NOK 10 000. Alternatively, one could have several possible grant-levels i.e. NOK 5 000, NOK 10 000 or NOK 15 000. The rationale for different grant levels would be that a conference held in Europe probably would be less expensive for a student coming from Europe than one travelling from the US and vice versa. In addition to information on the NAMMCO web site, announcement of the grant could be done through the different Conferences e-mail lists well in advance.

After having established criteria and guidelines approved by the Council, the Secretariat could handle the process and report back to the Committee, or the Secretariat could be responsible for nominating candidates to the Committee for its approval.

In return for the grant the successful applicant would have to either give a presentation at the conference or present a poster(s). In both cases a requirement should be to adequately promote NAMMCO by using the NAMMCO logo and presenting some basic information on NAMMCO. This does not mean that the person in question should give a presentation on NAMMCO or NAMMCO issues, but she/he must acknowledge that NAMMCO is a sponsor.

The idea is that NAMMCO would gain some publicity and coverage at the meetings/conferences and also a certain exposure at universities and research institutions. It would further motivate the students applying to do some study on NAMMCO. A clear disadvantage is that the target group would not be the general public. Another disadvantage at least when looking at the NAMMCO member countries is of course that there are far more potential students in Norway than in the other member countries.

Furthermore, although the assumption is that the number of applicants would be relatively small, the alternative never the less will require time spent on the administration of the support.

To dissolve the NAMMCO Fund

Another suggestion would be to dissolve the NAMMCO Fund. The remaining assets (funds not allocated) in the Fund are NOK 100 000. As mentioned above the Statutes of the NAMMCO Fund state that “if the NAMMCO Fund should be dissolved, the Council shall decide on the use to be made of any balance remaining, in accordance with the aim of the Fund”. A natural solution would therefore be to transfer the NOK 100 000 to the budget item general information on the NAMMCO budget.

One obvious result of dissolving the Fund is of course that the money previously allocated to the Fund each year, (the annual allocation to the NAMMCO Fund has been NOK 200 000, with the exception of the year 2004) may be released for other purposes. Various alternatives relating to the use of this “additional” money may be discussed. It can be split up and used to increase other budget items on the overall NAMMCO budget, it can be allocated to specific budget items or simply make it possible to, if not decrease so at least not increase the member contributions in the near future.

Also the time and effort spent on administering the Fund may now be used on other tasks in the Secretariat, and of course likewise for the members of the Board.

Concluding remarks

The underlying reason for the present review is as earlier mentioned a growing concern that the NAMMCO Fund does not generate the intended outcome. The amount of input with respect to the use of financial and human resources may perhaps be better spent on other priority tasks set by the Council.

Should the Board decide to recommend that the Fund should “stay alive” and suggest one of the alternatives to that respect, it should be noted that all suggestions except the “status quo” alternative needs further elaboration in order to be implemented.