

NAMMCO



**WORKING GROUP ON BYCELS
REPORT**

15 FEBRUARY 2018

@ North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission

Please cite this report as:
NAMMCO (2018) Report of the NAMMCO Working Group on BYCELS 15 February 2018

NAMMCO

*Postbox 6453, Sykehusveien 21-23, N-9294 Tromsø, Norway,
+47 77687371, nammco-sec@nammco.no, www.nammco.no, www.facebook.com/nammco.no/*

The Working Group on By-catch, entanglements and live strandings (BYCELS) met on 15 February 2018 from 09:00 – 15:30 hrs. Present were Guðni Magnus Eiríksson (Iceland), Kathrine A. Ryeng and Hild Ynnesdal (Norway), Nette Levermann (GL), and Signar Petersen (Faroe Islands). Geneviève Desportes, Strahinja Ivanovic (intern) and Charlotte Winsnes participated from the Secretariat.

1. OPENING REMARKS AND ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Charlotte Winsnes welcomed the participants to this first meeting of the BYCELS. Council at its last meeting decided to establish a Working Group directly under Council to deal with animal welfare issues related to by-catch, entanglement and live strandings. Council had agreed on the following terms of reference, document [NAMMCO/BYCELS-2018-02/03](#):

- 1) The Working Group shall upon request from the Council or individual member countries, provide advice on welfare issues related to by-catch, entanglement, and live strandings, affecting marine mammals. The Working Group shall ensure that such advice is based on the best available scientific findings, technological developments and traditional knowledge, with due consideration given to safety requirements for humans*
- 2) Members of the Working Group may raise specific questions for discussion during meetings of the Working Group. The Working Group may make proposals to the Council for specific tasks to undertake within its terms of reference*
- 3) Non-member governments with observer status in NAMMCO may request advice from the Working Group through the Council*
- 4) The Working Group may seek outside expertise if it considers this necessary and appropriate. The WG will nominate its Chair in agreement with FAC*

The meeting reviewed the terms of reference, the draft agenda (appendix 1) and list of documents (appendix 2). The agenda was adopted.

2. ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR

Winsnes informed the meeting that in line with the FAC agreed rotation plan for chairs in NAMMCO, Norway is up for the chairmanship of the BYCELS. The meeting agreed to suggest to FAC that Kathrine A. Ryeng be chair. The vice-chair was not elected pending FAC decision on the rotation plan.

3. DEFINING THE FOCUS AND WORK AREA OF THE WORKING GROUP

The chair, Kathrine A. Ryeng, gave a presentation covering issues like:

- Definition of bycatch: By-catch, including entanglement, is the “unintentional capture of nontarget species in fishing gear”.
- Overview of types of fishing gear with gill net fisheries identified globally as the gear with most entanglement incidents occurring.
- Overview of the by-catch problem globally, with examples of typically by-caught species with respect to tooted whales, baleen whales and pinnipeds. Norwegian by-catch estimates in the different groups were mentioned.
- Animal welfare implications of by-catch/entanglements – depending on species incidents range from animals trapped under water and drowning (mostly small whales and pinnipeds) to long term suffering (mostly large whales) due to starvation, increased drag, infections and/or severe tissue damage.
- By-catch mitigation.
Prevention is the ultimate goal. No single global solution for large whale entanglements – requires local solutions. Prevention tools is species depended – what works for one species does not necessarily work for another – example acoustic alarms for harbour porpoises

Three mitigation categories:

- Avoid encounters with fishing gear
 - Management procedures (reduction in fishing activity, closed areas, etc)
 - Reduce the loss of fishing gear
 - Remove lost or abandoned fishing gear
- Reduce entanglements in such gear where encounters cannot be avoided
 - Gear modification /new types of fishing gear
 - Acoustic alarms
- Minimize suffering and mortality associated with entanglement when entanglement occurs
 - Purse seine: Release entrapped animals
 - Disentanglement
- Draw attention to the following initiatives:
 - Global disentanglement response network in IWC, guidelines for rescue operations and training courses
 - Action plan for whale incidents in Norway describing reporting and allocation of responsibility with respect to live strandings, whale entrapped in aquaculture cages and whale entangled in fishing gear at sea.

The Action plan operating procedures, including euthanasia of whales, are based on “Guidelines for responsible handling of live stranded whales, whale in aquaculture cages, and whales entangled in fishing gear at sea” issued in 2017 by the Directorate of Fisheries
 - Norway has institutionalised removal of lost and abandoned fishing gear. Fisheries are required to report position of lost fishing gear and to mark the gear. The Directorate of Fisheries monitors and removes fishing gear in the Norwegian economic zone.

The meeting agreed to review what has been done in other organisations. IWC has done extensive work on entanglements. Both Greenland and Norway have organised the IWC large whale entanglement response training courses, held by David Matilla (leader of the Global Entanglement Response Network).

Reference was made to several Workshops held by the IWC of relevance for the work of the BYCELS with special emphasis on the Workshop on Global Assessment of Large Whale Entanglement and Bycatch Reduction in Fishing and Aquaculture Gear, held in Portsmouth, NH, USA. May 23-26 2016.

The meeting agreed that the aim should be to develop a set of NAMMCO guidelines that would function as advice for member countries.

The meeting also discussed the rationale of euthanasia of live stranded animals. It was agreed that for large whales, euthanasia, if feasible, is the best solution from an animal welfare perspective whereas for small whales and pinnipeds the situation might be different.

The meeting identified and agreed on the following action plan:

1. To make an overview of the extent of bycatch, entanglement and disentanglement and live strandings, including dead strandings in the member countries. To this end, the Secretariat will make a standardised table for the member countries to fill in. A starting point will be to look at the work done by the NAMMCO Work Group on by-catch.

2. To review IWC guidelines and others (Norwegian guidelines) on by-catch, including entanglement and disentanglement and live strandings with the aim of identifying procedures and actions for recommendation to NAMMCO members – make a practical guideline on how to tackle the problems. Greenland raised the issue of developing easily accessible guidelines for practical use for wildlife officers and hunters.

4. The Secretariat to inform relevant networks on the existence of BYCELS and ensure that NAMMCO is in the information loop on matters of interest to BYCELS.

3. IDENTIFYING ADDITIONAL EXPERTISE

The meeting agreed that the expertise of the members of the working group was sufficient for the tasks at hand and that external expertise would be sought when special issues required it. Such as people with fisheries technical gear knowledge and experienced fishermen.

4. SWOT

As an input to a strategy and capacity building discussion going on in NAMMCO, and as a tool for future evaluation, the Chair of NAMMCO, Amalie Jessen, has initiated a SWOT analysis to see where NAMMCO and the different committees stand in terms of strength, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

FAC had discussed the status of the SWOTs and agreed that it should be done and kept for internal use only. In that way responses would be more in depth and frank. Timing wise it is optimal to do the SWOTS now prior to the Panel Review (PR) report, so that a comparison can be done with what the PR comes up with.

The meeting reviewed the SWOT, see appendix 3. It was underlined that the particular elements in the SWOTS do not necessarily represent the view of all members.

5. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would be in the period 26 – 28 November with final date to be coordinated with the meetings of CHM and CIO.

6. APPROVAL OF REPORT

The report was adopted by correspondence on 26 February 2018.

Appendix 1

Draft annotated agenda

1. Opening procedure
 - Introductory remarks
 - Review of Terms of Reference for the Working Group
 - Adoption of agenda and review of documents
2. Election of Chair and Vice-chair
3. Defining the focus and work area of the Working Group
4. Identifying additional expertise
5. SWOT
6. Next meeting
7. AOB

Appendix 2

List of documents

NAMMCO/BYCELS-2018-02/01:	Annotated agenda
NAMMCO/BYCELS-2018-02/02:	List of documents
NAMMCO/BYCELS-2018-02/03:	Terms of Reference
NAMMCO/BYCELS-2018-02/04:	Reeds et al. 2006. Bycatch of Marine Mammals in U.S. and Global Fisheries
NAMMCO/BYCELS-2018-02/05:	Reeves et al. 2013. Marine mammal bycatch in gillnet and other entangling net fisheries, 1990 to 2011
NAMMCO/BYCELS-2018-02/06:	Michael J. Moore and Julie M. van der Hoop. 2012. The Painful Side of Trap and Fixed Net Fisheries: Chronic Entanglement of Large Whales
NAMMCO/CHM/CIO/BYCELS/2018-02: SWOTS in NAMMCO	