

NAMMCO



**MEETING OF
THE JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING
REPORT**

6 MARCH 2018

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NAMMCO

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MEETING OF THE JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES
6 March 2018, Tromsø, Norway
Report

1. CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS

The Chair of the Joint Meeting of the Management Committees (MCJ), Nette Levermann (GL), welcomed the delegates, observers, and invited participants to the meeting. Levermann also introduced herself and gave a brief summary of her involvement at the Ministry of Fisheries and Hunting in Greenland.

2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

The agenda was adopted and the list of documents reviewed, both documents are contained in Appendices 1 and 2 respectively.

The Chair drew attention to the following documents:

- NAMMCO/26/MC/05 summarising past proposals for conservation and management and responses to these
- NAMMCO/26/MC/06 summarising past requests to the Scientific Committee and responses
- NAMMCO/26/08 "Report of the 24th Scientific Committee

Prewitt informed the MCJ that document NAMMCO/26/MC/05 "Proposals for Conservation and Management" has a new format which replaces the table used in previous years, and the aim of the new format is to make it easier to track the progress of both new and old Proposals for Conservation and Management and Recommendations for Research.

3. ECOSYSTEM APPROACH

Review of requests by Council for advice from the Scientific Committee

- **R-1.5.3-2016** (ongoing): *monitor the development of the Mary River Project and assess qualitatively or if possible quantitatively the likely impact and consequences on marine mammals in the area*
- **R-1.5.4-2017** (ongoing): *advise on the best process to investigate the effects of non-hunting related anthropogenic stressors on marine mammal populations, including the cumulative impacts of global warming, by-catch, pollution and disturbance.*
- **R-3.4.9-2005** (ongoing) - *provide advice on the effects of human disturbance, including noise and shipping activities, on the distribution, behaviour and conservation status of belugas, particularly in West Greenland.*

The requests were discussed separately under the updates from the Scientific Committee (SC).

Update from the Scientific Committee

Tore Haug (NO), the Chair of the SC, updated the MCJ on the SC's discussions regarding Ecosystem issues.

Regarding **R-1.5.4**, the SC noted that this request will not have one answer that will entirely cover this request, and **recommended** that upcoming/future working groups consider request R-1.5.4, for example by adding non-hunting impacts to their agendas.

The SC also recommended that the GINR should be considered when new projects are proposed that may impact marine mammals in Greenland.

Comments and Discussion by the MCJ

The MCJ asked for clarification on the impact of the work of the various WGs if the non-hunting impacts are added to the WGs agendas in order to answer R-1.5.4. Haug informed the MCJ that adding

this to the WG agendas will either require that some other items are not discussed, or the meetings may need to be prolonged.

The MCJ **endorsed** the recommendation to add non-hunting impacts to the future agendas of the SC WGs.

3.1. Disturbance

Review of requests by Council for advice from the Scientific Committee

- **R-1.5.3** *The Council requests the SC to monitor the development of the Mary River Project and assess qualitatively or if possible quantitatively the likely impact and consequences on marine mammals in the area.*
- **R-3.4.9** *provide advice on the effects of human disturbance, including noise and shipping activities, on the distribution, behaviour and conservation status of belugas, particularly in West Greenland.*

Update from the Scientific Committee

Haug informed the MCJ that the NAMMCO-JCNB JWG discussed the Mary River project at their meeting in 2017 and stated, “The JWG expressed concern regarding development of mining activities and associated ship traffic on the Eclipse Sound narwhal stock. No similar example of such a high level of shipping and development has occurred in a high-density narwhal habitat so there is little precedent to inform an assessment of the impacts.”

The JWG provided a list of specific concerns for the Mary River Project, and shipping and icebreaking in Baffin Bay overall.

The SC noted that the JWG makes recommendations based on the information that is available on the current plans for the Mary River project at the time of their meetings, however there is often uncertainty around what the plans actually entail, and these plans appear to change often. This makes it difficult to give relevant management advice.

The SC reiterated its previous recommendation that all information on the Mary River project be presented to the JWG. It was suggested that someone from the Fisheries Protection Division in Canada should attend the next NAMMCO-JCNB JWG in 2019.

Additionally, the JWG also noted that increased shipping (in addition to Mary River Project) is of concern – narwhals are very skittish and easily disturbed, and “cumulative effects should be considered when new shipping and icebreaking activities are proposed for narwhal and beluga habitat areas.”

Updates from Member Countries and Observers

Canada acknowledged the interest in NAMMCO to obtain information on how projects such as these are approved in Canada and provided an update on the Mary River project.

The Nunavut Impact Review board (NIRB) is an institution of public government created by the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement to assess the potential impacts of proposed development in the Nunavut Settlement Area prior to approval of the required authorizations. Canada informed the MCJ that this impact assessment process is public and that information related to major resource development projects in Nunavut can be accessed online through NIRB’s public registry (available at: www.nirb.ca).

The Mary River project is an iron ore mine located on Baffin Island, near Pond Inlet, Nunavut. Ore from the mine site is shipped through Milne Inlet and then south through Davis Strait. Baffinland, the project proponent, is currently authorised to ship a maximum of 4.2 million tons of ore per year. In 2017, 4.06 million tonnes were shipped by 56 vessels. This is an increase from 2016, where 3.25 million tonnes were shipped, and 2015, when 1.33 million tonnes were shipped.

In 2017, Baffinland submitted an application to the NIRB to undertake winter sealift through Pond Inlet, but due to community concerns the application was withdrawn. Baffinland is currently looking into the possibility of building a railway connecting the mine site to a proposed port at Milne Inlet and expanding

production and related shipping to 12 million tonnes of iron ore per year. This proposal is currently undergoing a review by the Nunavut Planning Commission (NPC) to determine if an amendment would be required to the North Baffin Regional Land Use Plan. It is anticipated that the NPC will issue a determination on the proposed amendment in March 2018. If accepted by the NPC, the proposed amendment to the project would be subject to further impact assessment through the NIRB process.

With regards to project monitoring, it was noted that Baffinland suspended its ship-observer program (required as a term and condition of the project certificate) program due to some safety concerns. Discussions continue within the project-specific Marine Environment Working Group on how to address this. The MCJ discussed that the shipping is the activity of main concern regarding the Mary River project. Greenland noted that they have a strong interest in obtaining information on all projects that could impact species in their area, including not only the whales, but also seals.

Comments and Discussion by the MCJ

The MCJ **endorsed** the recommendation of the SC that all information on the Mary River project be presented to the JWG, and for someone from the Fisheries Protection Division in Canada to attend the next NAMMCO-JCNB JWG in 2019. Canada informed the MCJ that they will work with the NAMMCO Secretariat to determine which potential impacts and related indicators are of specific interest for updates concerning the Mary River project. In terms of DFO participation at future JWG meetings, Canada indicated that it would look into this possibility and report back to the Secretariat.

The MCJ **endorsed** the recommendation that cumulative effects should be considered when new shipping and icebreaking activities are proposed for narwhal and beluga habitat areas.

3.2. Climate Change

Update from the Scientific Committee

Haug noted that climate change is discussed in the SC each year, and is also dealt with in many of the working groups, including WGHAP, NAMMCO-JCNB JWG, etc. He also gave a presentation to the MCJ on the impacts of climate change on future harvests in the North Atlantic. The major findings of this work are:

- Increased northern movement of several commercial fish species seems possible, however not further north than the shelf slope for the demersal species such as cod and haddock. This would also indicate a high probability of increased fishing activity in these northern areas
- As boreal species such as capelin, herring and blue whiting migrate northwards for feeding, the question of relocating spawning grounds and egg, larval and juvenile distribution becomes vital for predicting the future
- Expanding spawning grounds to the shelf areas of Svalbard and Franz Jozef Land not impossible – e.g. for Greenland halibut and redfish
- With the assumed reductions in ice cover, pagophilic seal species will experience marked breeding-habitat loss in traditional breeding areas and will certainly undergo distributional changes, presumably also abundance reductions, with subsequent consequences for traditional harvest
- Temperate marine mammal species, including the exploited minke whale, are showing northward expansions of their ranges, which are likely to cause competitive pressure on some endemic Arctic species, as well as putting them at risk of predation and diseases
- Large commercial harvests in future accessible areas of the Arctic Ocean are not likely, at least not in the next 10–20 years
- A northward expansion of existing fishing and hunting activities in adjacent areas is possible and may result in future harvesting in the Arctic Ocean
- Development of fisheries for hitherto unexploited species cannot be ruled out

Comments and Discussion by the MCJ

Japan commented on the information on the northward movement of boreal cetacean species and asked whether Pacific minke whales or humpback whales have been observed in the Atlantic Arctic. Haug informed the MCJ that the Americans are observing more boreal whales in the Bering Sea north of the

Bering Strait, however this is a shelf area, while the area north of Svalbard is off the shelf and may prevent these species from moving even further north of Svalbard.

3.3. Marine Mammal – Fisheries Interactions

Review of requests by Council for advice from the Scientific Committee

- **R-1.1.5-1997** (standing): *review and update available knowledge on interactions between marine mammals and commercially exploited marine resources*
- **R-1.1.8-2008** (ongoing): *investigate dynamic changes in spatial distribution of cetaceans due to ecosystem changes and functional responses*
- **R-1.2.1-1992** (ongoing): *“multispecies models for management purposes...suggest required data and knowledge to make such models”*
- **R-1.2.2-1995** (standing): *monitor stock levels and trends in stocks of all marine mammals in the North Atlantic.*
- **R-1.4.7-2015** (ongoing): *in the “Economic aspects of marine mammal-fisheries interactions” section: Review results of MareFrame ecosystem modelling project*

The MCJ noted that R-1.1.5, 1.1.8, and 1.2.2 are many years old, and appear to be issues that have become part of the working procedures of the SC. The MCJ discussed whether these requests should be removed from the request list, and possibly added to the overall Terms of Reference for the SC. It was decided to leave these requests as “standing” on the request list.

The MCJ further noted that R-1.2.1 and R-1.4.7 will be answered, in part, by the SC in the near future when the SC reviews the results of the MareFrame project (discussed below), however it was noted that the “Economic aspects of marine mammal-fisheries interactions” may not be within the competence of the SC. The MCJ suggested that the SC should comment on whether considering the “economic aspects” should remain in their purview.

Update from the Scientific Committee

With regards to R-1.2.1 and R-1.4.7, the MareFrame project was scheduled to be completed in late 2017. The SC noted that the results of the MareFrame project will likely be useful to NAMMCO as models that will serve as building blocks for further development of multi-species modelling in the NAMMCO area.

The SC **recommended** that a small group be organised to review the report of the MareFrame project and prepare a document for the next SC meeting.

Comments and Discussion by the MCJ

The MCJ **endorsed** the recommendation of the SC for a small group to review results of MareFrame and present a review to the next SC meeting.

3.3.1. By-catch

Levermann noted that there are no requests from Council, but there are many recommendations to member countries from the SC’s By-Catch WG, which held meetings in 2016 and 2017.

Update from the Scientific Committee

Haug reported on the work of the SC’s BYCWG country by country.

Norway

Several important issues were identified with the approaches to by-catch estimation that was presented at the BYCWG, both with the data acquisition through the coastal reference fleet and the analyses. These issues prevented the BYCWG from endorsing the proposed by-catch estimates.

The group recommended methodological improvements to be implemented both in the data collection and the analysis before the by-catch estimates could be endorsed.

In addition, the BYCWG noted that if the same vessels are used in the coastal reference fleet (CRF) year after year, they will be correlation in the data samples which will lead to errors in the by-catch estimate and the WG recommended to modify the design of the selection process.

Norway has plans to update the by-catch estimates in 2018.

Comments from Norway

Norway commended the SC and the BYCWG on dealing with the issues.

Iceland

There were several issues with the analysis of the by-catch estimates presented to the BYCWG which prevented the group from accepting the estimates. The group provided several recommendations for revising the analysis of by-catch estimates as well as improving the data collection.

Iceland has submitted an updated working paper addressing most of the technical comments of the BYCWG, and these will be discussed via videoconference in March 2018.

Comments from Iceland

Iceland thanked Haug and the BYCWG for their work and welcomed the input. They informed the MCJ that they are working on making a new scheme for observation of gillnet fishing. Regarding the Greenland halibut gillnet fishery, Iceland informed the MCJ that these nets are set deep and therefore it seems unrealistic that there would be by-catch, but Iceland will consult with the MRI on this issue.

Iceland further updated the MCJ that they have now increased the observer coverage of the gillnet fleet, introduced more random sampling.

Faroe Islands

The SC recommended that a responsible precautionary approach be taken and that a proper assessment of the by-catch risk in the various fisheries be undertaken, beginning with those fisheries of higher concern such as the Very High Vertical Opening (VHVO) and pelagic pair trawling. The WG also provided recommendations for by-catch monitoring and observation.

Comments from the Faroe Islands

Faroe Islands informed the MCJ that they do not have gillnet fisheries in shallow waters and therefore by-catch is not an issue with respect to this gear type. The Faroe Islands have observed increases in pelagic fish stocks around the Faroe Islands, and the fisheries on these stocks has increased. These fisheries areas overlap with marine mammal species, and therefore there is a potential for by-catch. By-catch of marine mammal is obligatory to be reported in the electronic catch logbook.

The Faroe Islands commented that the BYCWG was focusing on the pelagic fisheries for the Faroe Islands, and not for the other countries. The Secretariat recalled the general Terms of Reference for the By-Catch Working Group, which were to

1. Identify all fisheries with potential by-catch of marine mammals
2. Review and evaluate current by-catch estimates for marine mammals in NAMMCO countries.
3. If necessary, provide advice on improved data collection and estimation methods to obtain best estimates of total by-catch over time.

Therefore as stated in task 1, the WG looks at the overlap between marine mammal distribution and fisheries to evaluate the potential risk of by-catch in all fisheries in all countries, based on known by-catch risks in similar fisheries (e.g. information from the ICES Working Group on By-Catch). Gillnet fisheries represent for example a high by-catch risk to, particularly, smaller cetaceans and coastal seals.

Estimate of by-catch were provided by Norway and Iceland and were therefore reviewed by the working group, as the first step. In the absence of by-catch estimates for the Faroe Islands and Greenland, the Working Group started to assess the by-catch risk associated to the different fisheries, based on the fisheries information provided to the group. In the Faroe Islands, as noted above, the gillnet fisheries

take place in deeper water and do not seem to represent a risk to marine mammals. The risk associated to pelagic fisheries, with anecdotal reporting of by-catch in the Faroese and high risk to some cetacean species known from other places, needs to be evaluated. Therefore the Working Group recommended the Faroes to provide specific information necessary to provide a reliable risk assessment.

Greenland

The WG reviewed the information provided on the present sources of by-catch reporting and discussed their relative reliability. It provided several recommendations for improvement and identified areas where already existing information should be analysed.

Comments from Greenland

Greenland informed the MCJ that many of these recommendations have already been taken into consideration in the processes within Greenland, and previous reports from 2013 are being made available for review. Greenland also commented that gathering this information requires communication with multiple departments and will take some time to review.

Comments and Discussion by the MCJ

The MCJ endorsed all of the recommendations from the BYCWG which can be found in Appendix X.

3.3.2. Fish farms

Update from the Scientific Committee

The SC's BYCWG discussed removals of seals from around fish farms and recommended that both Norway and Iceland obtain reliable and complete reporting of all removals.

Updates from member countries

The Faroe Islands informed the MCJ that the numbers of grey seals that are shot at fish farms in the Faroe Islands are being monitored. These numbers have not been validated yet, but the preliminary numbers indicate a downward trend.

Comments from the MCJ

The MCJ **endorsed** the recommendation that Norway and Iceland obtain reliable and complete reporting of all removals.

3.3.3 Consumption of resources by marine mammals

Update from the Scientific Committee

Haug presented a summary of the project "Exploring marine mammal consumption relative to fisheries removal in the Nordic and the Barents Seas." The project reviews and summarises the currently available information on diet, abundances, and residence times of marine mammals in the Nordic and the Barents Seas, and follow recently recommended approaches to estimate plausible ranges of total consumption, and also compares marine mammal consumption to removal by fisheries (retrieved from ICES databases). Preliminary results suggest that marine mammals consume around 15 million tons \pm 50% of prey per year, predominantly targeting low and mid trophic level species (zooplankton and small pelagic fish). Fisheries remove around 4.3 million tons per year, targeting mid and top trophic levels (small pelagic fish and larger demersal and pelagic fish).

The SC welcomed this joint initiative and noted that there is a lot of NAMMCO participation in this project. Important areas for NAMMCO are covered by this project, and the SC looks forward to seeing the published results.

Comments from the MCJ

The MCJ thanked Haug for this interesting presentation which provided valuable information for the discussions on ecosystem approach to management. This project highlights the importance of marine mammals as a large component in the ecosystem and the role of these species in the ecosystem, and the importance to the hunts in the North Atlantic. The MCJ looks forward to the publication.

It was further noted that questions on this issue was raised many years ago, and it is now good to have numbers on which to base the discussions with the Fisheries Division. Greenland also noted that it could

be interesting to look into these results with respect to specific areas, and whether there are areas where they could have more questions and request more elaboration on the results.

Haug also noted that the MareFrame project which was discussed under Item 3.3 incorporated information that this project provided. However, the MareFrame project included only the Icelandic area, and there is interest in doing similar work in the Barents Sea. Such an exercise could also build upon other types of modelling work.

4. PROCEDURES FOR DECISION MAKING ON CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT MEASURES

4.1. Struck and Lost (R-1.6.4)

- **R-1.6.4-2016** (ongoing): *the SC and the Hunting Committee... provide advice on the best methods for collection of the desired statistics on losses.*

Prewitt reported that the SC agreed to direct the WGs to indicate when more reliable struck and lost (S&L) were a priority for improving the assessment and would make the most significant difference in terms of quota allocation, so the collection of S&L data could be prioritised for these hunts. The WG could then give recommendations on how to better obtain S&L data for the targeted hunts.

An update from the Committee on Hunting Methods will be given to Council.

Comments from the MCJ

There were no comments from the MCJ.

4.2. Catch Validation

Prewitt noted that a previous recommendation for Greenland to investigate the differences between the two reporting schemes (Pinarneq and Skærmeldingschema) was discussed at SC/23, where Greenland provided an explanation.

Levermann noted that the SC also previously recommended that catches be validated on a yearly basis.

Updates from member countries

Greenland updated the MCJ that a quality review of the catch data that is provided by the hunters is performed yearly.

5. USER KNOWLEDGE IN MANAGEMENT DECISION-MAKING

There was no discussion on this item.

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

No other business was raised, and Levermann thanked Haug for his presentations, the member countries for their input, and closed the meeting.

The report was adopted on 8 March 2018.

Appendix 1 - Agenda

AGENDA ITEMS	DOCUMENT REFERENCE
1. CHAIRMAN'S OPENING REMARKS	
2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA	
3. ECOSYSTEM APPROACH 3.1. Disturbance 3.2. Climate change 3.3. Marine mammal – fisheries interactions 3.3.1. By-catch 3.3.2. Fish farms 3.3.3. Consumption of resources by marine mammals	NAMMCO/26/08, Item 7, new request R-1.5.4 NAMMCO/26/08, Item 7.3.1 NAMMCO/26/08, Item 7.3.2 NAMMCO/26/08, Item 7.1.3
4. PROCEDURES FOR DECISION MAKING ON CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT MEASURES 4.1. Struck and lost 4.2. Catch validation	NAMMCO/26/08, Item 5.3, and new request R-1.6.5
5. USER KNOWLEDGE IN MANAGEMENT DECISION-MAKING	
6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS	

Appendix 2 – Joint list of documents for the Management Committees

Document no	Title	Agenda item
NAMMCO/26/MC/01	Joint List of Documents for the Management Committees	
NAMMCO/26/MC/02	Draft Agenda MCJ	
NAMMCO/26/MC/03	Draft Agenda MCSW	
NAMMCO/26/MC/04	Draft Agenda MCC	
NAMMCO/26/MC/05	Recent proposals for Conservation and Management and research recommendations	MCJ, MCC, MCSW
NAMMCO/26/MC/06	Summary of Requests by NAMMCO Council to the Scientific Committee, and Responses by the Scientific Committee	MCJ, MCC, MCSW
NAMMCO/26/08	Report of the 24th meeting of the Scientific Committee	MCJ, MCC, MCSW