

**NAMMCO**



**WORKING GROUP ON BYCELS  
REPORT**

**30 NOVEMBER 2018**

@ North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission

Please cite this report as:  
NAMMCO (2018) Report of the NAMMCO Working Group on BYCELS 30 November 2018

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The Working Group on By-catch, entanglements and live strandings (BYCELS) met on 30 November 2018. Present were Guðni Magnus Eiríksson (Iceland), Kathrine A. Ryeng and Hild Ynnesdal (Norway), Nette Levermann (GL), and Signar Petersen (Faroe Islands). Charlotte Winsnes participated from the Secretariat.

### **Actions arising from the meeting**

#### **Secretariat**

- Define what kind of data base will be set up in the Secretariat
- Confer with SC WGBYCATCH on date requirement
- Investigate stranding networks and how these are working

#### **All members**

- Fill out and update the revised overview table (template)
- Commit to submit the data required
- Inform Parties and the Secretariat of special events

## **1. OPENING REMARKS AND ADOPTION OF AGENDA**

The chair, Kathrine Ryeng, welcomed the participants to the meeting. The meeting reviewed and adopted the agenda and list of documents – appendix 1

## **2. FOLLOW UP FROM THE LAST MEETING**

The discussion under this agenda item was structured around

- Table for information on by-catch, entanglement and strandings
- Guidelines

### **Overview table**

The Secretariat had been tasked with standardising the information requested from member countries on by-catch, entanglement and strandings. Document NAMMCO/BYCELS-2018-02/02 represented a draft excel table with information gathered from reports of the CHM and national progress reports (NPR).

BYCELS discussed and revised the table with an emphasis on how to standardise the reporting to NAMMCO. As pointed out in other committees BYCELS underlined the importance of achieving an annual reporting routine where member countries report once a year on all required information for all committees. Presently the same information is being requested by different committees at different times and it generate different numbers. This may be a result of submitting data at different times of year.

BYCELS agreed on a report template – see appendix 2.

To ensure streamlining of data requests in NAMMCO, BYCELS proposed that a small group with representation from all Parties should look at the revised National Progress Report to define the data to be submitted. Looking at how and what is reported in other fora like the IWC and NEAFC could be informative. It was proposed that SC WGBYCATCH be consulted to harmonise the requested information as these two bodies will work with much of the same information.

BYCELS agreed to keep parties informed of special events and to look at how a stranding network could be set up.

Reporting of by-catch, entanglement and strandings in member countries where reviewed:

## **Faroe Islands**

Fishing vessels have to report everything they catch and if they catch marine mammals, they should specify which species. However, there is no systematic and controlled reporting of by-catch in the Faroes, but there is incidental reporting of different cetacean species by-caught. It is therefore difficult to know the level or extent of by-catch. There is no gill net fishing in shallow waters (usually representing a high risk for by-catch) but there are other fishing gear taking different species of marine mammals. Minke whales have been by-caught in trawls and pinnipeds in longlines.

Fishermen report via an electronic logbook or an ordinary logbook that goes to the Ministry. From 2019 it will be only electronic logbooks in use.

Reporting of strandings are sent to the Museum of Natural History on a voluntary basis. Reporting of lost fishing gear is mandatory.

## **Greenland**

The reporting system in Greenland is a self-reporting system where all catches are reported to the Ministry of Fisheries, Hunting and Agriculture. For every marine mammal taken under license (this entails all whales and walrus, for seals only hunting permit and no license is required) the hunter or the responsible person (captain of the harpoon boat or the chosen leader in the collective hunt) is required to fill out a reporting form (Særmeldingskjema) that is submitted to the municipal authorities shortly after the hunt and later forwarded to the Ministry.

The report includes information about the hunter, his license and boat, description of the weapon used to kill the animal, serial number of the grenade in the case of a large whale, etc. Furthermore, it gives information on species, catch area and different kinds of biological data depending on the species e.g. for large whales: flensing place, body length, sex, reproductive state of females, stomach contents, weight of edible products and estimated time to death (TTD). Cases of struck and lost are also reported.

In addition, catches of all marine mammals are reported annually to PINIARNEQ.

Regulations require that entangled and stranded large whales and narwhal and beluga have to be reported immediately to the Ministry by hunters and fishermen. Only the large fishing vessels have electronic logbooks – all others report via ordinary logbooks. The buyer/traders presently have an obligation to report by-caught marine mammals.

In 2011 a stranding course was organised. The course was lead by Joe Geraci. The course developed a protocol for strandings and looked at how stranding networks could be set up. Greenland has a very long and uninhabited coastline resulting in sporadic reporting that will never really depict the extent of strandings. Incidents should be reported, and it is the responsibility of the municipality to deal with it. Typically, if the condition of a stranded animal permits it will be towed out at sea to be carried away with the stream.

The Ministry has developed a procedure described in a one-page folder for entangled and stranded whales that is publicly available. Among other thing it is recommended that pictures or written documentation describe exterior signs left by fishing gear, ice entrapment, ship strikes, killer whale bits and shoots. The folder that was developed and has been available from 2011 has generated very few responses.

In 2016 a disentanglement course was organised for wildlife officers lead by David Mattila. Disentanglement equipment were bought and placed in different regions.

There has been an increase in humpbacks being entangled in pond net (cod fisheries). In Greenland by-caught animals that are euthanised must be distributed for free without any moany involved. For whalers and fishermen this represents bad business, as they receive a small payment for killing the animal and at the same time ruining their own market.

## **Iceland**

Reporting of whale catches is mandatory and based on hunters self-reporting and by inspectors when these are active. Reporting by fisheries are via electronic logbooks for the large vessels (larger than 15 meters) and by an app for smaller vessels.

Presently the reporting is only for catch but the authorities are looking into ways of incorporating by-catch. There is an increasing focus on by-catch initiated by the US requirement but there is no system in place yet. Reporting of by-catch is encouraged but it is not mandatory.

Harbour porpoises are often by-caught in lump sucker net and represents a problem for the fisheries.

Reporting of lost fishing gear is mandatory. Strandings are reported to the Marine Institute on a voluntary basis.

## **Norway**

Reporting of by-catch is mandatory, but fishermen do not comply with this. So far, Norway has not used inspector to oversee by-catch. Small cetaceans are by-caught in gill nets and revised estimates are underway for the harbour porpoises calculated using the reference fleet. Large cetacean entanglements (humpbacks and killer whales) in purse seines nets and gill nets have increased in Northern Norway since 2012, due to the seasonal overwintering of spring spawning herring in the fjords. As a result of this the Directorate of Fisheries arranged a disentanglement course for operative personnel both from the Directorate's Sea Unit and the Coast Guard in 2017. The course was held by David Mattila. The Directorate has also developed an Action plan on how to handle different events involving large whales, including live strandings, whale in fish farm cage, and entanglements. Regarding entangled or entrapped whales in purse seine nets, the Action plan clearly states that the whales have priority over the catch of the fish.

The Institute of Marine Research has an ongoing project looking at the possibility of using pingers to prevent harbour porpoise by-catch in the Reference fleet. Pingers have been used with success by other countries, and it will be investigated if it is feasible to introduce this in the Norwegian fleet. It is known that seals can be triggered by the pingers as they see them as food bells. Pingers for large whales exists but have not been a success.

There is currently no stranding network in Norway or routines for investigation and sampling of stranded cetaceans or pinnipeds. Strandings are reported on a voluntary basis.

The Directorate of Fisheries have for 30 years had a programme to remove lost fishing gear along the Norwegian coast. Today there exists an app for reporting. Lost fishing gear that "continue to fish" represents a by-catch and entanglement problem besides being a conservation issue. Fishermen are supposed to report to the Directorate the position where they have lost gear.

## **Guidelines**

BYCELS agreed at the last meeting 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. The overall goal would be to 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.

The IWC guidelines emphasize that they are made to provide principles and guidelines for trained personnel to safely and effectively respond to reports of entangled live whales at sea. The objective of an entanglement response is to remove all detrimental entangling gear safely from the whale and learn as much from the entanglement as possible to ultimately prevent entanglements from occurring. Actions by untrained persons can worsen an entanglement and put human lives at risk. Therefore, the IWC and David Mattila do not give detailed instructions on how to actually disentangle but state that specific disentanglement procedures should be addressed through a thorough and strict training programme.

Greenland and Norway have both organised this training programme lead by Mattila, and it was agreed that BYCELS should develop NAMMCO general disentanglement guidelines that are tuned into Arctic conditions.

Other guidelines discussed were how to euthanise and sample stranded animals. Norway has recently developed guidelines on euthanasia of live stranded cetaceans, as well as guidelines on how to response to whales entrapped in fish farm cages, and to manage an entanglement situation of large whales. - NAMMCO/BYCELS-2018-02/03 - that would be useful as a basis NAMMCO/BYCELS-2018-02/03 for developing NAMMCO guidelines.

### **3. FUTURE WORKPLAN**

Based on the discussion under agenda item 2, BYCELS agreed to the following work plan:

1. To finalise the tables for reporting on by-catch, entanglement and strandings with the aim of being able to identify where the problem is and what it is in order to make recommendations on mitigation
2. Develop guidelines on
  - How to euthanise live stranded animals
  - How to take samples from stranded animals
  - General guidelines on how to disentangle in the Arctic

### **4. ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

The member countries have agreed to a rotation plan for the various committees in NAMMCO. This is to ensure balanced representation between the members. This means that the committees cannot freely choose among its members anymore as the country filiation will be fixed by the rotation plan.

Norway has held the chairmanship in 2018 and Iceland will take over after the next Council meeting in April 2019.

### **5. NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting is scheduled for 5 or 7 February 2019 in Copenhagen. Final date to be confirmed after consultation with CIO.

### **6. AOB**

No issues were raised under this agenda item.

### **7. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT**

The report was approved by correspondence on 21 December 2018.

**Appendix 1**

**Agenda**

1. Opening procedure
  - a. Adoption of agenda and review of documents
2. Follow up from last meeting
  - Overview table
  - Guidelines
3. Future workplan
4. Election of officers
5. Next meeting
6. AOB

**List of Documents**

|                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| NAMMCO/BYCELS-2018-02/01: | Annotated agenda and list of documents                         |
| NAMMCO/BYCELS-2018-02/02: | Overview of by-catch, entanglement and strandings<br>in NAMMCO |
| NAMMCO/BYCELS-2018-02/03: | Norwegian guidelines on entanglement                           |

