

**Report of the  
Scientific Committee Working Group on NASS-95**

Tromsø, 25 February, 1994



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## **1. Chairman's welcome and opening remarks**

The Chairman, F. Larsen, welcomed the participants (Appendix 1) to this first meeting of the Working Group.

## **2. Adoption of agenda**

The Agenda as adopted is given in Appendix 2.

## **3. Appointment of rapporteur**

The Chairman acted as rapporteur with the assistance of Desportes.

## **4. Review of available documents**

A document entitled: "Application for participation of marine ornithologists on NASS 1995" was received from ORNIS CONSULT Ltd..

## **5. Identification of priority species**

There was no change to the list of priority species identified by the NAMMCO Scientific Committee at its meeting in Reykjavik in 1993, *i.e.*:

Faroe Islands- pilot whales, bottlenose whales, bottlenose dolphins, white-beaked dolphins, Atlantic white-sided dolphins;

Greenland- minke whales, fin whales;

Iceland- minke whales, fin whales, sei whales;

Norway-minke whales;

## **6. Area coverage**

### *6.1. Areas planned to be covered by national research programmes*

Faroe Islands- The Faroese contribution will probably be one survey vessel in one month with coverage approximately equal to the NASS-89 effort.

Greenland- The Greenlandic contribution will be two aircraft in one month each with coverage of East and West Greenland approximately as in NASS-89.

Iceland- The Icelandic contribution will be at approximately the same level of

funding as in NASS-87 and NASS-89. The preliminary plans are for a coverage similar to NASS-87, with the exceptions to include the area around Jan Mayen, drop the area southeast of Iceland and increase effort southwest of Iceland. An aerial survey for coastal minke whales is planned for 1994 (IWC "small area" CIC). The Working Group recommends to consider a similar aerial survey as part of NASS-95.

Norway- The Norwegian contribution is expected to be at the same level as in NASS-89 (9 vessels, 5 weeks), but with an additional 2 vessels to cover the western Norwegian Sea including Jan Mayen.

### *6.2. Other areas of interest*

Obviously, the NASS-95 will benefit from as wide a coverage as possible of the known summer ranges of the priority species identified, especially as relates to areas bordering NAMMCO areas for pilot and minke whales. However, for some of the species the Working Group identified a number of areas of particular concern, that it would be advantageous to have covered:

Minke whale- Eastern Canadian waters

Fin whale- Eastern Canadian waters

Pilot whales- Waters off eastern USA, around the British Isles, off France, off Spain, off Denmark, off Germany and off the Netherlands.

The Working Group also noted that the results of the SCANS survey, particularly concerning concentration of minke whales, may give new information concerning the interest of including coverage of the North Sea.

## **7. Methodology**

### *7.1. Platform*

Faroe Islands	-	Ship.
Greenland	-	Aircraft.
Iceland	-	Ships offshore; possibly aircraft inshore.
Norway	-	Ships.

### *7.2. Data collection and analysis*

- Faroe Islands - Line transect sampling and analysis with Independent Observer (I/O) experiments.
- Greenland- Cue-counting for fin and minke whales; line transect sampling and analysis for pilot whales.
- Iceland - Line transect sampling and analysis with some Independent Observer experiments on the shipboard surveys; cue-counting on aerial surveys.
- Norway - Line transect sampling and analysis with I/O experiments on all vessels.

### 7.3. Other

The Working Group briefly discussed other aspects of survey methodology and identified the following items for consideration at the next meeting of the Working Group:

- problems related to surveys of pilot whales, specifically definition of group size;
- problems related to improving estimates of population size for small cetaceans, specifically problems related to definition of group size and to correct species identification;
- the use of data from the US Navy Integrated Undersea Surveillance System (IUSS) should be considered for obtaining information on:
  1. migrations;
  2. distribution for allocating effort in sighting surveys;
  3. abundance;
- exploration of new techniques for data collection, *e.g.* distance measurements;

In addition, the Working Group identified the following items for later consideration:

- the question of survey mode;
- behavioural and peripheral data;

The Working Group should obtain information on the experience gained through the SCANS survey, including new methods and techniques which may be developed and tested.

It was agreed that the Chairman of the Working Group should solicit information on possible new technologies.

## 8. External expertise

This item was left for discussion at a later stage.

## **9. Increasing the coverage of NASS-95: who to approach and how?**

The Working Group discussed how most efficiently to increase the coverage and participation in the NASS-95. It was agreed that the best way to proceed was for the Chairman of the Scientific Committee approach the IWC Scientific Committee and to ask the Chairman of NAMMCO to invite through the secretariates member states of ICES and IWC to participate in the planning and conduction of the NASS-95. In addition the Chairman of NAMMCO should be asked to invite specifically the following countries to participate: USA, Canada, UK, Ireland, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, France and Spain.

The circular, "Planning for North Atlantic Sightings Survey in the Summer of 1995: NASS-95", which was distributed to the members of the IWC Scientific Committee at it's meeting in May, 1994, is attached as Appendix 3.

In addition to these formal invitations, the members of the Working Group should approach informally relevant scientist in the countries mentioned above, to enquire about the practical possibilities of their participation.

## **10. Co-operation with other projects**

### *10.1. Whale abundance in relation to environmental factors*

The Working Group briefly discussed an informal suggestion to use data collected during NASS-95 to study abundance and distribution of whales in relation to remote sensing data on environmental factors. A similar project was discussed in relation to the NASS-87, but for various reasons not carried out at that time. The Working Group expressed its interest in this study, and requested that more detailed information was made available to the next meeting of the Working Group.

### *10.2. ORNIS CONSULT seabird studies*

An application from ORNIS CONSULT for participation of marine ornithologists during NASS-95 was briefly discussed by the Working Group. The aims of the seabird research programme are:

- i to describe the distribution of seabirds;
- ii to investigate the relationships between the distribution and abundance of seabirds and environmental parameters;
- iii to investigate the levels of co-occurrence of seabirds and cetaceans;

The Working Group expressed its interest in the project, but decided to leave it to the individual participating countries whether they could cooperate with this project.

## **11. Funding**

Funding of the various national research programmes should be dealt with at the national

level. However, there may be a need for funding of external expertise to attend meetings of the Working Group, as well as other items of common interest.

No such tasks were identified at this meeting.

## **12. Other business**

### *Time schedule*

The Working Group discussed the timing of the different steps in planning for the NASS-95 and agreed on the following schedule:

- March-94: Approach/invite new participants
- May-94: Meeting of the Working Group during the IWC Scientific Committee meeting in Mexico (cancelled as only two members of the Working Group were present)
- November-94: Meeting of the Working Group before or after the Marine Mammal Symposium in Tromsø to discuss in detail the design of the various parts of the surveys.
- January-94: Meeting of the Working Group to plan final area coverage and allocation of effort and to decide on *e.g.* transect mode.

### *Announcement*

It was agreed to announce the plans for the NASS-95 in relevant newsletters, *e.g.* the European Cetacean Society Newsletter and the North Atlantic Marine Mammal Association Newsletter.

**List of Participants**

Geneviève Desportes, Faroe Islands

Finn Larsen (Chairman), Greenland

Johann Sigurjónsson, Iceland

Nils Øien, Norway



## **Agenda**

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3. Appointment of rapporteur
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6. Area coverage
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10. Co-operation with other projects
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