

2.2
**REPORT OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE WORKING
GROUP ON BY-CATCH**

Teleconference 17 February 2003

Chairman Kim Mathiasen (Greenland) welcomed the participants to the meeting: Dr Arne Bjørge (Norway), Mr Elling Lorentsen (Norway), Mr Bjarni Mikkelsen (Faroe Islands), Mr Jens Dam (Faroe Islands), Ms Droplaug Ólafsdóttir (Iceland) and Mr Daniel Pike (NAMMCO).

1. Adoption of agenda

The draft agenda (Appendix 1) was adopted without change.

2. Appointment of rapporteur

Daniel Pike, Scientific Secretary of NAMMCO, was appointed as rapporteur for the meeting.

3. Information regarding ongoing monitoring and management of marine mammal by-catches outside the NAMMCO Area

3.1 European Union Initiative

Last year the Working Group recommended that Norway continue to report on the “European Initiative” in bycatch monitoring and reduction to NAMMCO through this Working Group. Bjørge informed the Working Group that a Nordic Co-ordination meeting will be held in advance of the ASCOBANS meeting in April, at which time progress in bycatch monitoring and reduction within the European Union will be discussed. Until that meeting takes place, little new information will be available. Bjørge agreed to send a written report to the Working Group immediately after the Nordic Co-ordination meeting, sometime in March 2003.

4. Review progress in monitoring and management of marine mammal by-catches within the NAMMCO Area

4.1 Progress in monitoring marine mammal by-catches by NAMMCO Member Countries

Mathiasen reported that **Greenland** had taken no new initiatives with regard to bycatch in 2002. There is a system of mandatory reporting of marine mammal bycatch through logbooks kept by all fishing vessel operators. National inspectors observe on larger vessels operating offshore. In addition a Wildlife Officer must be informed of any incident involving the entanglement of a marine mammal in fishing gear. In 2001 no bycatch was reported through the logbooks, and it is not known if this represents an absence of bycatch or a lack of reporting. The incidents of humpback whale entanglement (see 5.2) were reported to a Wildlife Officer.

Bjørge reported that the reporting of marine mammal bycatch through fishery logbooks was now mandatory in **Norway**. However, the logbook information is also being supplemented through other measures. Independent fishery observers are used on a sub-sample of the offshore fishing fleet, and their observations will be scaled up

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to estimate total bycatch in the respective fisheries. Further, a "reference fleet" is being established, which will be a sub-sample of vessels from which very detailed effort and bycatch data will be collected. Methods for collecting bycatch data from small coastal vessels (Sjark) are still under development. It is expected that the new system will begin to return useable data within the next few months. The emphasis is now directed towards the entire Norwegian fishing fleet, and not only focused on the fisheries of anticipated by-catches of marine mammals. The reason for this is that documentation of "clean fisheries" is anticipated to be prerequisite for "environmental labelling" of fish products.

Mikkelsen noted that there had been no recent changes in the bycatch reporting system for the **Faroe Islands**. Reporting of marine mammal bycatch in fishery logbooks is mandatory for mid- to large size vessels. At present there is no reporting system for small coastal vessels. Faroese observers are present on international exploratory fisheries (*e.g.* for tuna) and report any bycatch that occurs. Mikkelsen was unsure about the status of bycatch reporting on foreign vessels fishing in Faroese waters, and agreed to look into this matter for the Working Group.

Olafsdóttir noted that the reporting of marine mammal bycatch has been mandatory in **Iceland** for some years, but a systematic effort on reporting and compiling marine mammal by-catch was first initiated in the beginning of 2002. All fishermen using gill nets were sent a letter from the Directorate of Fisheries explaining the procedure of reporting the bycatch through fishery logbooks. Fisheries inspectors from the Directorate of Fisheries have furthermore explained the procedure during regular visits to the boats.

Preliminary results from 2002 indicate that about 5% of the vessels participating in the gillnet fishery returned reports in which bycatch information was recorded, and in these reports bycatch was recorded in about 8% of the nets that were set. However a small proportion of these vessels accounted for most of the reported bycatch. Eight species of marine mammals were caught, of which harbour porpoises and harbour seals were the most common species. The relatively low proportion of vessels that returned records indicates that the real bycatch may be much higher than that recorded. Even those that did report bycatch seemed to do so sporadically and furthermore, records from certain areas were completely missing.

From the beginning of 2003 the entire fishing fleet will receive instructions of reporting marine mammal by-catch with each fishery logbook the boats will receive from The Directorate of Fisheries, including all large vessels as well as the gill net boats. No further plans have been made to improving the progress of monitoring marine mammal by-catch in Iceland.

4.2 Evaluation of procedures developed and implemented by NAMMCO Member Countries

In 2002 the Working Group considered that procedures for the monitoring of bycatch in NAMMCO member countries had not yet reached a stage of implementation where an evaluation could be conducted. The Working Group concluded that this was still

the case, and that at least another year would be required before the systems in Norway and perhaps Iceland were at a stage where a useful evaluation could be conducted. However it was recommended that such an evaluation should be conducted at the earliest possible opportunity.

5. Reporting of bycatch to NAMMCO

5.1 Use of National Progress Reports to report bycatch.

In 2002 the Working Group recommended that the format of the National Progress reports should be changed such that the reports discriminated between no bycatch, and an apparent lack of bycatch because of inadequate monitoring. It was also recommended that the Reports should include a brief explanation of how bycatch information was collected, including the methodology used (*e.g.* log book, observers, questionnaires), the fisheries covered and the extent of the coverage by fishery, and should be adequate for a future evaluation of bycatch monitoring procedures by the Scientific Committee and/or this Working Group.

Pike reported that the format had been modified, mainly through the addition of a narrative introduction to the bycatch section, in which the monitoring programs would be fully described. Member countries had been instructed to use the new format for the preparation of National Progress Reports for 2001. The Working Group reviewed the new format and found it acceptable.

5.2 Reporting in 2001

Pike reviewed the bycatch information in the National Progress Reports for 2001. Norway did not use the revised format and hence did not report bycatch. The Faroe Islands used the revised format and reported a bycatch of 1 bottlenose whale. Greenland reported a bycatch of 2 humpback whales in the year 2000. However the report was incomplete and no details about monitoring methodology and coverage, fishery or gear type were given. Iceland reported that no systematic reporting of by-caught marine mammals took place in 2001, but that information would be available for 2002 (see 4.1).

In the discussion the Working Group noted the continued lack of adequate reporting by some member countries and reiterated its recommendation from 2002 for member countries to report their bycatch to NAMMCO through the new National Progress Report format.

6. Other items

Mathiasen reported that there had been an increase in the number of large cetaceans entangled in fishing gear in West Greenland in recent years. In some cases these animals are still alive when found and are killed by the fishermen. He noted that this might be a matter of concern to NAMMCO, both in terms of total allowable catch and the methods by which these animals are killed.

The Working Group noted that similar incidents may occur with small cetaceans and pinnipeds in other areas as well as Greenland. The Working Group agreed to bring this

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matter to the attention of the Management Committee, particularly with regard to the killing methods employed in large whale entanglements.

7. Recommendations

The Working Group, noting that the reporting of bycatch to NAMMCO was still not adequate, reiterated its recommendation from 2002, that NAMMCO member countries report their bycatch to NAMMCO through the new National Progress Report format.

As soon as one member country has a functioning bycatch monitoring system in place, the Working Group should meet to conduct a full evaluation of the system and make recommendations on bycatch monitoring to all member countries. The evaluation should focus on the practical and logistical aspects of the reporting system. It was anticipated that this could be done within the next 12 to 24 months.

8. Further meetings?

The Working Group considered that annual teleconferences should be adequate until the evaluation mentioned under 7.ii. can be conducted.

9. Adoption of report

The report was adopted by correspondence on 25 February, 2003.

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 - 5.1 Use of National Progress Reports to report bycatch.
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