



NAMMCO ANNUAL MEETING 28

22-25 March 2021

Online

MEETING OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE FOR SEALS AND WALRUS

ANNOTATED DRAFT AGENDA

1. Chair's Opening Remarks

Relevant Documents for this Meeting:

NAMMCO/28/MC/05: List of Proposals for Conservation and Management and Recommendations for Research, with Responses from the Parties.

NAMMCO/28/MC/06: List of Active Requests from the NAMMCO Council to the Scientific Committee, with Responses from the Scientific Committee.

NAMMCO/28/08: Summary of the Scientific Committee Reports from 2019 & 2021.

The meeting will focus on:

- a) Reviewing new management advice regarding hunting quota,
- b) Considering the new proposals for conservation and management and recommendations for research (with implications for Member Countries) made by the Scientific Committee during their meetings in 2019 and 2021, and
- c) Determining whether any requests for advice may be considered completed and closed.

2. Adoption of Agenda

3. Conservation and Management Measures for Seal Stocks

The MCSW is specifically asked to discuss and decide whether to:

- endorse new SC management advice regarding hunting quota,
- endorse new SC proposals for conservation and management,
- endorse new SC recommendations for research (with financial implications)
- recommend to Council that the requests the SC considers answered be closed.

Given the time constraints generated by the online format, only information related to the above bullet points will be presented for each species. Additional information is available in the SC reports (see document NAMMCO/28/08).

The Vice-Chair of SC, Aqqalu Rosing-Asvid (GL) will provide information from relevant workshops and working group meetings and outline new management advice on hunting quota.

3.1. Harp seals

Summary of the 2019 meeting of the Joint ICES-NAFO-NAMMCO Working Group on Harp and Hooded Seals (WGHARP) & the 2020 ICES-NAMMCO Seal Modelling Workshop

Given by Vice-Chair of the Scientific Committee, Aqqalu Rosing-Asvid (GL).

New Management Advice on Hunting Quota

SC26 recommended an upper limit for removals for the White Sea/Barents Sea stock of 21,172 seals, and 11,548 seals for the Greenland Sea stock.

See section 8.1.2 from [page 29 of the SC26 report](#) for further information on the assessment.

New Recommendations for Research

- New aerial surveys of harp seal pups in the Greenland Sea be carried out in 2022.
- Norway continue its efforts to obtain reproductive samples, particularly in years when an aerial survey is completed.

3.2. Hooded seals

New Management Advice on Hunting Quota

For the Greenland Sea stock, SC27 recommended that there be no commercial catch but that scientific and subsistence hunting may continue.

See section 8.2.2 from [page 31 of the SC26 report](#) for further information on the assessment.

New Recommendations for Research

- New aerial surveys of hooded seal pups in the Greenland Sea be carried out in 2022.

3.3. Grey seals

Summary of the 2021 meeting of the Coastal Seals Working Group (CSWG)

Given by Vice-Chair of the Scientific Committee, Aqqalu Rosing-Asvid (GL).

3.4. Harbour seals

New Proposal for Conservation and Management

- NAMMCO discuss the proposal that all catch statistics for harbour seals in Greenland be removed from the NAMMCO website due to known errors and a lack of validation.

New Recommendations for Research

- Greenland enhance efforts to identify new breeding and moulting sites for harbour seals (particularly in West Greenland) using most feasible methods in the different areas.
- Norway complete the collection and analysis of DNA samples from harbour seal pups to help determine stock structure and propose more scientifically based management units.

3.5. Ringed seals

For Information - New Request from Council & SC Response

At a special restricted Council-HoDs meeting in 2020, a new request (R-2.3.3) was made to the SC that they convene a Ringed Seal Working Group in 2022 with the aim of conducting a thorough review of the existing data and performing an assessment of stocks where possible. If the data required for a full assessment of (some of) the stocks are not available, the WGs and the SC should identify, and prioritise, which specific data essential to their assessments are still needed.

SC27 agreed that a WG on this species would not be delayed beyond 2022. It also agreed that as a first step, an overview of information required and available to perform an assessment should be collated, together with a review of available published literature. An intern at the Secretariat will begin the work on this review in 2021.

Request for Advice Considered Answered by the SC

Does the MCSW agree with the SC that this request has now been answered and therefore recommend to Council that the request be closed?

Request R-2.3.2: “To advise on what scientific studies need to be completed to evaluate the effects of changed levels of removals of ringed seals in West and East Greenland.”

The SC has noted that assessing the status of ringed seals and the effects of harvests is particularly challenging given simultaneous changes in sea ice conditions, marine productivity and polar bear predation. Due to the unpredictable changes in these parameters, producing estimates of sustainable catches requires a significant investment of resources for research on:

- *abundance estimates*
- *productivity and age distribution of the catch*
- *changes in the required environmental parameters such as stable ice and suitable snow for breeding, as well as glacial fronts for foraging.*

In providing this overview of the important topics for research to evaluate the effects of changed levels of ringed seal removals in Greenland, the SC considers this request answered.

3.6. Bearded seals

For Information - New Request from Council & SC Response

Just as for ringed seals, a special restricted Council-HoDs meeting in 2020, made a new request (R-2.7.1) that the SC convene a Bearded Seal Working Group in 2022 with the aim of conducting a thorough review of the existing data and performing an assessment of stocks where possible. If the data required for a full assessment of (some of) the stocks are not available, the WGs and the SC should identify, and prioritise, which specific data essential to their assessments are still needed.

SC27 agreed that a WG on this species would not be delayed beyond 2022. It also agreed that as a first step, an overview of information required and available to perform an assessment should be collated, together with a review of available published literature. An intern at the Secretariat will begin the work on this review in 2021.

3.7. Walrus

Request for Advice Considered Answered by the SC

Does the MCSW agree with the SC that this request has now been answered and therefore recommend to Council that the request be closed?

Request R-2.6.8: “Provide assessments, and advice on, the sustainability of allowing walrus hunt all year round in Greenland on all stocks.”

At SC26 in 2019, the SC concluded that it did not see any particular issues with allowing a hunt all year round but emphasised the importance of any catch of a female with a calf being reported as two animals (independent of whether the calf is retrieved or not).

4. Any Other Business