



JOINT MEETING OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES

*13-14 September 2022
Grand Hotel, Oslo & Hybrid*

REPORT

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The content of this report contains the view of the Working Group and does not necessarily represent the views of the NAMMCO Scientific Committee or Council.

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1. CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS

The Chair of the Joint Meeting of the Management Committees (MCJ), Ulla Svarrer Wang (FO), welcomed participants to the meeting (see Appendix 1 for the list of participants) and noted that Albert Chacón from the NAMMCO Secretariat would act as rapporteur.

The Chair noted that all the meeting documents had been made available on the NAMMCO website two weeks prior to the meeting. The list of meeting documents is available in Appendix 2 of this report. The Chair drew particular attention to the following documents as relevant for all agenda items:

NAMMCO/29/MC/05: Recent Proposals for Conservation and Management and Research Recommendations.

NAMMCO/29/MC/06: Summary of Requests from the NAMMCO Council to the Scientific Committee and Responses by the Scientific Committee.

NAMMCO/29/08: Report of the 28th Meeting of the Scientific Committee.

The Chair noted that Member Countries were invited to submit updates on advances towards the implementation of previous proposals for conservation and management and recommendations for research in writing prior to the meeting.

The Chair informed all participants that this joint meeting addressed issues of relevance to both the Management Committee for Cetaceans (MCC) and the Management Committee for Seals and Walrus (MCSW) and indicated that the meeting would focus on:

- a) Considering the new proposals for conservation and management and recommendations for research (with implications for the Member Countries) made by the Scientific Committee during their meeting in 2022
- b) Determining whether any requests for advice may be considered completed and closed
- c) Discussing issues related to User Knowledge within NAMMCO

2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

The agenda was adopted without modification.

3. WORK PROCEDURES IN NAMMCO

3.1 PRECAUTIONARY APPROACH WITH FOCUS ON DEPLETED STOCKS

Active requests from council

R-1.6.7: the SC is requested to explain how and at what level the precautionary approach is, or can be, integrated into advice provided by the SC for use in conservation and management, with a particular focus on depleted stocks.

Updates from the Scientific Committee

The Chair invited Bjarni Mikkelsen, Chair of the Scientific Committee, to present updates from the SC. Mikkelsen thanked the Chair for her clear opening remarks and proceeded with the updates. In response to Request 1.6.7, the Scientific Committee noted that SC 27 (2021) had tasked the joint JCNB-NAMMCO Working Group on Narwhal and Beluga (JWG) to initiate the development of a principle-based approach for the sustainable management of small and/or depleted stocks. The SC indicated that the JWG had drafted 7 such principles incorporating a precautionary approach that were presented to the SC at its last meeting (SC 28). The SC welcomed the effort by the JWG and agreed that these principles provided good reference points for further discussions at its next meeting.

Comments from Member Countries

Greenland expressed interest in the issue, especially in the light of the East Greenland narwhal situation and emphasized the importance to focus this precautionary approach also on all small cetaceans, seals, and walrus, not only on narwhal and beluga.

The SC Chair confirmed that this initiative was of general characters and would concern all marine mammal stocks within the remit of NAMMCO management.

Greenland also emphasized the need for a more comprehensive approach incorporating user knowledge in management decisions. It was noted that belugas in East Greenland had not been defined as a stock there and that hunting had not occurred due to a lack of scientific proof of beluga presence. However, Greenland pointed out that local knowledge contradicted scientific results and that belugas had been observed and captured by hunters in East Greenland in the past, highlighting the importance of including user knowledge in defining this precautionary approach.

Conclusion

The MCJ noted the report from the Scientific Committee and the updates provided.

4. ECOSYSTEM PERSPECTIVE

4.1 MARINE MAMMAL-FISHERIES INTERACTIONS

4.1.1 By-catch

Active requests from council

R-1.1.5: to periodically review and update available knowledge related to the understanding of interactions between marine mammals and commercially exploited marine resources.

R-1.1.8: in addressing the standing requests on ecosystem modelling and marine mammal fisheries interaction, to extend the focus to include all areas under NAMMCO jurisdiction. In the light of the distributional shifts seen under T-NASS 2007, the SC should investigate dynamic changes in spatial distribution due to ecosystem changes and functional responses.

Updates from the Scientific Committee

In response to request 1.1.5, the SC indicated that by-catch estimates for harbour porpoise, harbour and grey seals for the Norwegian commercial coastal gillnet fisheries had been received at the last meeting and that SC 28 recommended that the BYCWG continue and progress in its assessments of the by-catch risks in the different fisheries, with the aim of reviewing advances at the next SC meeting.

With regard to request 1.1.8, the SC recommended it to be split in two separate requests, as follows:

1. *In addressing the standing requests on ecosystem modelling and marine mammal fisheries interaction, to extend the focus to include all areas under NAMMCO jurisdiction.*
2. *In the light of the distributional shifts seen under T-NASS 2007 and later surveys, the SC should investigate dynamic changes in spatial distribution due to ecosystem changes and functional responses.*

Recommendations from the Scientific committee

The Chair draw attention to previous recommendations reiterated by the Scientific Committee and noted that three new recommendations for research and one new proposal for conservation and management had been formulated under this item by SC 28. All recommendations and updates are recorded in document NAMMCO/27/MC/05A, available on the NAMMCO website.

Previous Recommendations for Research reiterated by the Scientific Committees

SC 28 reiterated that:

- *Norway should continue to improve the monitoring of by-catch rates and accurate species identification through the implementation of REM systems, habitat preference models, and photographs.*
- *Iceland collects jaws/photos of by-caught seals to improve species identification and skin samples to inform genetic research.*

New Recommendations for Research with implications for member countries

- *In the Norwegian CRF, the collection of the lower jaw of seals becomes a mandatory term in the boat contract.*
- *Iceland encourages collecting DNA samples and taking photos of by-caught seals in 2022 to validate inspector reports and calculate rate of misidentification by fishermen.*
- *Iceland supports the analysis of DNA samples to assess rates of species misidentification through the provision of necessary funding.*

Previous Proposals for Conservation and Management reiterated by the Scientific Committee

SC 28 reiterated that:

- *Iceland monitor the monkfish and Greenland halibut gillnet fisheries.*

New Proposals for Conservation and Management

- *Iceland includes a field for [the fishery] target species in the logbook as well as other ways to distinguish these coastal and offshore (cod and Greenland halibut) fisheries for monitoring by-catch.*

Comments from Member Countries

Greenland informed of ongoing efforts to collect lost fishing gears, which are taking fish and seabirds, and increase awareness on that issue to minimize the problem. In relation to the US Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA), Greenland is also addressing by-catch in marine mammals, considering all stakeholders. This process is ongoing with the regional management bodies with the aim to include best practices and regulations in the management aspects. In this regard, Greenland informed that hunters are now asked to report by-catch.

Norway informed about the publication of a scientific article that concluded by-catch of harbour porpoise in Norway was not sustainable, but that controlled experiments with reduced by-catch results indicated that the implementation of mitigation measures could make by-catch sustainable. The anthropogenic mortality of killer and humpback whales in purse seine fisheries for herring was low despite frequent entrapment. Norway also informed that the estimation of by-catch in grey and harbour seals was in progress and that to improve species identification of by-caught seals, a prototype of a video system with artificial intelligence would be tested this autumn. Regarding request 1.1.8, Norway is working on the second part of the request.

Iceland noted that monkfish fisheries could not be the focus of monitoring efforts, due to them being almost inexistent in Iceland, but that cod and Greenland halibut fisheries were more problematic and that improvements in the way by-catch is recorded in Iceland were under consideration. The chair noted that monkfish fisheries were not included in the new proposal that the MCJ had to decide whether to endorse or not (It had been endorsed by the MCJ in 2018, NAMMCO/26).

Conclusion

All new recommendation for research with implication for members countries and new proposals for conservation and management were **endorsed** and the rewording of request R-1.1.8 was **adopted**.

4.2 ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Active requests from Council

R-1.5.3: 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.

Updates from the Scientific Committee

SC 28 answered request 1.5.3 by indicating that a workshop would be held in December 2022 under the Joint Working Group (JWG) on Narwhal and Beluga to assess the anthropogenic impacts on marine mammals (with the target species being narwhal, beluga and walrus) of activities associated to both the Mary River project in Canada and the mining activities in Wolstenholme Fjord (Dundas Ilmenite project), in Greenland.

Comments from Member Countries

Greenland expressed concerns on the Mary River project in Baffinland and highlighted that the same concerns had also been raised by the Joint Working Group (JWG) on Narwhal and Beluga. The increased traffic of vessels in the northern shipping road and associated ice-breaking activities would negatively affect the populations of marine mammals such as narwhal, beluga and bowhead whale, and that would also negatively impact livelihoods in Greenland.

Conclusion

The MCJ noted the report of the Scientific Committee and welcomed the planning of a disturbance workshop in December to assess such anthropogenic impacts on marine mammals.

5. MULTISPECIES APPROACH TO MANAGEMENT AND MODELLING

Active requests from Council

R-1.2.1: to consider whether multispecies models for management purposes can be established for the north Atlantic ecosystems and whether such models could include the marine mammals' compartment. If such models and the required data are not available, then identify the knowledge lacking for such an enterprise to be beneficial to proper scientific management and suggest scientific projects which would be required for obtaining this knowledge.

R-1.5.4: committed to furthering its ecosystem approach to the management of marine mammals and recognising the range of anthropogenic pressures facing North Atlantic marine mammals associated with the climate and environmental changes taking place, the Council requests the SC to 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.

Updates from the Scientific Committee

Regarding Request 1.2.1, the SC noted that a review of ecosystem models including the marine mammal component was presented at meeting 28. The SC agreed that a workshop to assess from a marine mammal perspective the model portfolio available for the North Atlantic was desirable but postponed its planning to the next meeting of the SC.

SC 28 answered Request 1.5.4 by reiterating from SC 24 (2018) that all Working Groups systematically include *Other [than removals] anthropogenic impacts* as an agenda item in their consideration. This is always discussed in all working groups.

Comments from Member Countries

Greenland noted shipping was increasing in all places in Greenland, not only transportation of goods, but also fishing trawlers, family boats and, probably the most problematic, big tourist cruises coming to all towns and isolated areas or fjords. Hunters in remote areas now experience disturbance in hunting activities and are worried for the disturbance on narwhals and other species in East Greenland and other places.

Greenland also informed that the parliament had tasked the Cabinet to introduce a new executive order to limit the presence of large vessels and tourist cruises in areas important for narwhals and belugas.

Conclusion

The MCJ noted the updates provided by the Scientific Committee and remarks from Greenland.

6. USER KNOWLEDGE

At the last MCJ meeting, all Parties agreed on the fact that including user knowledge was a requirement to ensure management decisions were based on the best available knowledge. The involvement of local people in decision-making was seen as critical if management advice was to be followed, and it was agreed that further work on this topic should be carried out within the MCJ. In the interim, due to other commitments no advances had been made under the auspices of the MCJ.

The Chair noted the Secretariat had tasked Martin Binachon, NAMMCO intern the last half of 2021, to look into examples of how user knowledge had been collected in a structured and systematic way, and also to look at examples of research projects where user knowledge had been an integrated part. Such examples are available as working document NAMMCO/29/08. Binachon gave a presentation outlining the content of this document, with the aim to initiate a discussion within the MCJ on how to progress with this topic.

Discussions

Greenland emphasised that user knowledge is an issue that needs to be focussed on in the future and stated its importance in the Greenlandic decision-making process. In order to fill the gap between the western Scientific Knowledge and local User Knowledge systems, it is important to improve the structure of User Knowledge collection and its use in management issues. Structured collection of User Knowledge needs to be developed and implemented, emphasizing that hunters are very good at making observations.

Greenland is eager to work with this issue with all relevant stakeholders and has started to draft an executive order on the collection and use of hunter knowledge. This will be implemented as soon as the executive order is coming into force. Data will be collected and organized in a structured way, with the aim to balance decision processes where both Science and User Knowledge are put together.

Norway found the presentation of Binachon very informative and thanked him for it. It noted there were issues with coastal seals in Norway where user knowledge could be useful, as hunters' observations on seal abundance were usually higher than the numbers derived from scientific surveys. Norway commented on the need to report and record observations of coastal seals in a systematic way and that developing a systematic approach to collecting and processing such user data would be worth exploring.

The Norwegian Fishermen Organization asked for making an intervention under this agenda item. The Chair gave the floor to its representative, Maria Pettersvik Arvnes.

Summary provided by the Norwegian Fishermen Organization:

The professional fishermen's union and business organization in Norway wants to draw a picture about the use of acoustic pingers in Norway and, in particular, the requirement to use pingers in Vestfjorden in Lofoten that has been in force for two winter seasons.

Norwegian fishermen find that the decision-making basis for the pinger order was deficient, and therefore have some suggestions to how the Norwegian management might use fishermen knowledge in their decision making. Using pingers leads to extra time consumption, dangerous situations when the pinger gets stuck in the gillnet hauls and it is relatively expensive. In addition, when fishermen do not register a decrease in the amount of bycatch, and are not heard by the administrative authority,

this can become a source of frustration. Among researchers, however, the picture is quite different, and several studies show that pingers have a good effect in preventing unwanted by-catch, evidencing divided opinions between fishermen, scientists, and management.

The Directorate of Fisheries did an evaluation of the effect of the regulation after the end of the season, but the fishermen's own observations have not been used to a sufficient extent, as there has not been a systematic collection of information on bycatch from the entire fleet. Until now reporting catch and by-catch has only been possible for vessels over 13m. Since large parts of the fleet during this fishery are vessels under 13m, we believe that the decision-making basis on which the Directorate of Fisheries has based its evaluation has not been representative for the entire fleet. We have therefore suggested that they must plan so that all fishermen who are required to use pingers also have the opportunity to report the amount of by-catch. From next year's season, however, there will be a change to this, and reporting catch and bycatch will be possible for vessels under 13m as well.

Since there are divided opinions about the positive effect pingers might have, we encourage the Directorate of Fisheries to compare data from the entire fleet group that has fished with pingers in Vestfjorden with fleet groups that have fished elsewhere without pingers. We also recommend that it will be established a reference group consisting of fishermen who fish in Vestfjorden with pingers, and use this group when evaluating the effects before next season. We believe that such a comparison is essential to create the legitimacy needed to create positivity and trust in such a comprehensive regulation as the pinger regulation actually is.

Comments from Member Countries

Norway acknowledged that fishers and hunters in Norway do not always agree with scientists in their observations and informed about their willingness to submit a new proposal for management to the MCJ. This new proposal from Norway was aimed at finding a better way to collect information on coastal seal presence and abundance to improve the assessments for management of harbour and grey seals. Norway worded this new proposal as follows:

“Norway should look into how to include user knowledge in the management of coastal seals, i.e. to collect hunter observations in a systematic way to complement existing survey methods, specifically by improving spatial and temporal coverage and resolution.”

Norway intervened to announce a second new proposal aimed at creating a new Working Group to deal with the integration of User Knowledge in management decisions. Norway presented this new proposal to the MCJ. This new proposal was worded as follows:

“From points raised during the council meeting and previously by various parties, it seems there is imbalance between how purely scientific information and information derived from various stakeholders are used in assessment and management approaches for marine mammals in the NAMMCO context.”

While the topic of how to include user knowledge in management processes has been raised in various specialised working groups , it seems this topic is of sufficiently broad relevance as to warrant a separate working group to specifically address how best to include user knowledge in management and decision-making processes. Such a working group should consist of relevant stakeholders (such as hunters etc) as well as, managers, and scientists with expertise on marine mammal management and, more importantly, representatives with expertise in how to incorporate user knowledge in research and management processes.”

Norway was aware that the creation of a new working group would have financial implications and noted that this would be taken into account. Iceland noted that the decision on creating a new WG should be referred to the Council and suggested that the countries should further discuss the precise wording. The Joint Management Committee agreed that if the Council endorsed establishing Working Group on User Knowledge, a small group can be tasked to develop Terms of Reference to be presented at the next Council meeting.

Greenland praised the excellent presentation by Binachon and supported the text of this new proposal for a Working Group on User Knowledge. Greenland wanted to make a statement under this agenda item and the chair gave the floor to Vittus Qujaukitsoq from KNAPK (Greenland).

Statement from Greenland:

Greenland agrees with the inclusion of User Knowledge in decision making and reiterates the rights of Indigenous peoples to use living resources and maintain a sustainable life and economy, including the right of local communities to sustain traditional hunting and costumes in their societies. There should be no discrimination to include this right to obtain a reasonable life and economy. How to involve local communities is a challenge but NAMMCO should look at the international declarations on human rights to facilitate the inclusion of local traditions and customs when dealing with the management of resources.

Conclusion

The MCJ welcomed the new proposals from Norway under this item and agreed to **recommend** them to Council for final decision and implementation, after agreement on the text.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The SC made a closing remark on User Knowledge, indicating that User Knowledge is important for NAMMCO, but is a sensitive issue with which the SC has dealt with over several years.

8. CLOSE OF MEETING

The Chair thanked the participants for their attendance and contributions.

The meeting was closed at 09:16 on 14 September 2022.

9. ADOPTION OF REPORT

A draft of the report was circulated on 14 September 2022 and was finalised and adopted on 15 September 2022

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APPENDIX 2: JOINT LIST OF DOCUMENTS OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES

Doc. No.	Title	Agenda
NAMMCO/29/08	Report of the 28th Meeting of the Scientific Committee	MCJ, MCC, MCSW
NAMMCO/28/MC/01	Joint List of Documents for the Management Committees	MCJ, MCC, MCSW
NAMMCO/28/MC/02a	Draft Agenda Joint Meeting of the Management Committees (MCJ)	MCJ
NAMMCO/28/MC/02b	Draft Annotated Agenda Joint Meeting of the Management Committees (MCJ)	MCJ
NAMMCO/28/MC/03a	Draft Agenda Management Committee for Seals and Walrus (MCSW)	MCSW
NAMMCO/28/MC/03b	Draft Annotated Agenda Management Committee for Seals and Walrus (MCSW)	MCSW
NAMMCO/28/MC/04a	Draft Agenda Management Committee for Cetaceans (MCC)	MCC
NAMMCO/28/MC/04b	Draft Annotated Agenda Management Committee for Cetaceans (MCC)	MCC
NAMMCO/28/MC/05	List of Proposals for Conservation and Management and Recommendations for Research, with Responses from Parties	MCJ, MCC, MCSW
NAMMCO/28/MC/06	List of Active Requests from the NAMMCO Council to the Scientific Committee, with Responses from the Scientific Committee	MCJ, MCC, MCSW
NAMMCO/28/MC/08	Letter of Concern from the Scientific Committee	MCC
NAMMCO/28/MC/08	User Knowledge: «food for thought» for NAMMCO	MCJ

MC: Management Committee

MCJ: Joint Meeting of the Management Committees

MCC: Management Committee for Cetaceans

MCSW: Management Committee for Seals and Walruses

APPENDIX 3: AGENDA

- 1. Chair's Opening Remarks**
- 2. Adoption of Agenda**
- 3. Work Procedures in NAMMCO**
 - 3.1. Precautionary Approach with focus on depleted stocks**
- 4. Ecosystem perspective**
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