



NAMMCO ANNUAL MEETING 30

MEETING OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE FOR SEALS AND WALRUS

2 March 2023, online
1400-1700 CET

DRAFT ANNOTATED AGENDA

1. CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS

Relevant documents for this meeting:

NAMMCO/30/MC/05: Recent Proposals for Conservation and Management and Research Recommendations

NAMMCO/30/MC/06: Summary of Requests from the NAMMCO Council to the Scientific Committee and Responses by the Scientific Committee

NAMMCO/30/08: Report of the 29th Meeting of the Scientific Committee

The meeting will focus on:

- *Reviewing the new information on seal species and walrus provided by the Scientific Committee during its last meeting in 2023 (SC/29).*
- *Considering both the new and reiterated proposals for conservation and management and recommendations for research (with implications for Member Countries) made by SC/29.*
- *Considering updates from the member countries on the proposals for conservation and management measures*
- *Reviewing responses from SC/29 to active requests for advice and determining whether any requests maybe considered completed and closed.*

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

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

The relevant requests and responses from the SC are given under the respective agenda items.

2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

3. CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT MEASURES FOR SEAL AND WALRUS STOCKS

3.1 BEARDED SEALS

NAMMCO/30/08, item 11.1

Active request:

- **R-2.7.1** (ongoing) to convene a working group in 2022 with the aim of conducting a thorough review of the existing data and to go ahead with the assessment of stocks for which it is possible. If the data required for a full assessment of (some of) the stocks were not available, the WGs and the SC should identify, and prioritise, which specific data essential to their assessments are still needed.

From SC/29:

A Bearded Seal Workshop (BSWS) will be held online 21-23 March 2023 with ToR to review available information and assess the status and trends of the species throughout its range and identify threats and critical knowledge gaps.

The WS should define the area for which an assessment could be conducted, and where the abundance data would be the most useful to progress in assessing the conservation status of a stock.

Recommendation for conservation and management

Greenland

- The catch data be available to the upcoming BSWS and RSWG meetings.

3.2 RINGED SEALS

NAMMCO/30/08, item 11.2

Active and standing requests:

- **R-2.3.1** (ongoing) to advise on stock identity of ringed seals for management purposes and to assess abundance in each stock area, long-term effects on stocks by present removals in each stock area, effects of recent environmental changes (i.e., disturbance, pollution, climate change) and changes in the food supply, and interactions with other marine living resources.”
- **R-2.3.3** (ongoing) to convene a working group in 2022 with the aim of conducting a thorough review of the existing data and to go ahead with the assessment of stocks for which it was possible. If the data required for a full assessment of (some of) the stocks were not available, the WGs and the SC should identify, and prioritise, which specific data essential to their assessments are still needed.

From SC/29:

The planned ringed seal working group (RSWG) will operate via several short online meetings in 2023.

Recommendation for conservation and management

Greenland

- The catch data be available to the upcoming BSWS and RSWG meetings.

3.3 GREY & HARBOUR SEALS

NAMMCO/30/08, item 11.3

Active requests:

- **R-2.4.2 (ongoing)** to provide a new assessment of grey seal stocks throughout the North Atlantic.
- **R-2.5.2 (ongoing)** to conduct a formal assessment of the status of harbour seals in all NAMMCO areas as soon as feasible”.

From SC/29:

The Coastal Seals WG will meet 8-11 May 2023 with Terms of Reference:

- 1) To provide a new assessment for grey and harbour seals throughout the North Atlantic.
- 2) To provide guidelines for responsible removals of small coastal seal stocks.

3.4 HARP AND HOODED SEALS

NAMMCO/30/08, item 11.4

Active and standing requests:

- **R-2.1.4 (standing)** to regularly update the stock status of North Atlantic harp and hooded seals as new information becomes available
- **R-2.1.9 (ongoing)** to investigate possible reasons for the apparent decline of Greenland Sea stock of hooded seals; and assess the status of the stock.

From SC/29:

The Joint ICES/NAFO/NAMMCO Working Group of Harp and Hooded Seals (WGHARP) will meet during autumn in 2023 to implement the new management tools, to discuss and include new data, and to develop new advice for the management of harp and hooded seals.

It was noted that the hooded seal was the most polluted of the seal species, with high levels of PCBs and Hg measured, and that no assessment had been conducted for the NW Atlantic hooded seals since 2004.

3.5 WALRUS

NAMMCO/30/08, item 11.5

Active and standing requests:

R-2.6.3 (ongoing) provide advice on the effects of human disturbance, including fishing and shipping activities, tourism, hyper carbon explorational and mineral extractions on the distribution, behaviour and conservation status of walrus in Greenland.

From SC/29:

It is recommended that the request is considered closed based on:

- Hydrocarbon exploration is not a threat anymore due to the stop of oil exploration in Greenland, and fishing is not considered and issue any longer.
- In general, there is no new data available to respond to this request, apart from specific recommendations to the walrus population near the Dundas Mine in Qaanaaq provided at the Disturbance WS.
- Hunting is the most important issue impacting walrus populations in Greenland.
- Tourism was shown to have no effect on walrus haul-out behaviour, according to a recent study in Svalbard, and is therefore not considered a factor which could be relevant.
- Recommendations arising from the joint NAMMCO/JCNB Disturbance Workshop (December 2022), i.e.,

Greenland

- The regional aerial survey of the east side of Smith Sound be the minimum area that should be covered for monitoring walrus abundance and distribution. Surveys should occur in April, annually during the first 3 years of production, to allow detection of any substantial changes.
- The satellite imagery of Wolstenholme Fjord be collected annually to determine walrus density, and eventually walrus counts if <30 cm resolution imagery becomes available.
- The telemetry data on walrus habitat use, distribution and migration patterns be combined with a study of benthos covering the foraging areas in Wolstenholme Fjord to improve the assessment of the relative importance of the potential foraging area impacted by the mining operation (disturbance and siltification).
- The walrus hunting effort in Wolstenholme fjord be monitored in cooperation with local hunters, so to allow for a cumulative impact assessment.

4. ANY OTHER BUSINESS