

NAMMCO



JOINT MEETING OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES

1 March 2023
Online

REPORT

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Chair’s opening remarks	4
2. Adoption of Agenda	4
3. Work Procedures in NAMMCO	4
3.1 Precautionary approach with focus on depleted stocks	4
3.2 Criteria for prioritising stock assessment in NAMMCO	5
4. Environmental and Ecosystem Perspective	7
4.1 Marine mammal-fisheries interactions.....	7
4.1.1 By-catch	7
4.2 Environmental Issues	8
4.2.1 NAMMCO-JCNB Joint scientific Working Group Disturbance Workshop	8
4.3 Multispecies approach to Management and Modelling	9
5. User Knowledge	10
6. Update on members responses to proposals for Conservation and management	10
7. Any other business	11
8. Close of meeting	11
9. Adoption of Report	11
Appendix 1: Participant List	12
Appendix 2: Joint List of Documents of the Management Committees	14
Appendix 3: Agenda	15

The Chair of the Council, Petter Meier (NO), opened the 30th Annual Meetings of NAMMCO noting this year's decision to hold the meetings of the Management Committees online prior to the meeting of the Council. He underlined that the Management Committees, together with the Council, were the decision-making bodies of the Commission. It is within the remit of the Management Committees to propose measures for conservation and management with respect to stocks of marine mammals to the Parties, and it is these committees that make recommendations to the Council concerning scientific research.

Meier looked forward to two days of fruitful discussions and gave the word to Amalie Jessen (GL), Chair of the Management Committee for Seals and Walrus (MCSW) who would also chair the joint meeting of the Management Committees.

1. CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS

Amalie Jessen welcomed participants to the Joint Meeting of the Management Committees (MCJ), (see Appendix 1 for the list of participants). She noted that NAMMCO's Scientific Secretary Albert Chacón would act as main rapporteur, with support from the Secretariat.

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

- *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 Chair noted that Parties had been invited to submit updates in writing on advances towards the implementation of previous proposals for conservation and management and recommendations for research in writing prior to the meeting. The received updates were reflected in document NAMMCO/30/MC/05.

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

- a) Considering the new or reiterated proposals for conservation and management and recommendations for research (with implications for the Parties) forwarded by the Scientific Committee, SC 29, during its last meeting in January 2023, and whether the MCJ could reach consensus for forwarding them to the Parties.
- b) Reviewing responses from SC/29 to active requests for advice and determining whether any requests maybe considered completed and closed.
- c) Make recommendations to the Council concerning scientific research.
- d) 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 to the Scientific Committee from the Council

- **Request R-1.6.7:** *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 Sandra Granquist, Vice-Chair of the Scientific Committee, to present updates from SC 29. In response to request R-1.6.7, the SC had continued discussing the reference points for a principle-based precautionary approach first presented at SC28. SC 29 finally agreed on the eight principles listed below in Box 1 for better integrating and enhancing a precautionary approach in its management recommendations and, consequently, in the management advice of NAMMCO.

Recommendations from the Scientific Committee

SC 29 agreed to recommend to the Council for adoption the eight principles listed below for enhancing and systematise a precautionary approach in the management of cetacean and pinniped stocks within the remit of NAMMCO.

Box 1. Principles for the incorporation of a precautionary approach to stock management in NAMMCO

1. Anthropogenic removals of marine mammals should be assessed for sustainability.
2. Sustainable management actions should be to maintain or restore stocks at levels ideally above 60% of their equilibrium in the absence of anthropogenic removals, disturbance and resource competition.
3. Stocks that are depleted below 60% should be managed to increase so that they can recover to the 60% level in a reasonable time period. For example, by having total removals that ensure at least a 70% probability of increase.
4. Stocks that are small (<1000 individuals, unless there are more than 400 reproductive age females in the population) should be fully protected from exploitation unless a data-based assessment is able to recommend a sustainable hunt.
5. Management decisions should be based on the best available science, which may include hunter and user data and observations.
6. Where the best available science is insufficient the precautionary approach shall be widely applied, particularly for small stocks. With greater uncertainty more caution is required.
7. Acknowledging that halting all hunting of a stock may not be sufficient to promote recovery of a depleted or small stock, additional management actions should be considered.
8. All species assessments should include data requirements for future assessments.

3.2 CRITERIA FOR PRIORITISING STOCK ASSESSMENT IN NAMMCO

SC 29 also responded to two requests for advice from the Heads of Delegation (HoDs):

- How to prioritise the assessment of marine mammal species
- Whether NAMMCO needed within a precautionary framework some rules on the regularity of surveys, assessments, etc.

Recommendations from the Scientific committee

SC 29 recommended that the three criteria below, without any order of priority, be used for prioritising the assessment of the stocks within the remit of NAMMCO.

- Stocks with concerning population status.
- Stocks for which no assessment has been conducted.
- Assessments of each stock should be conducted at a minimum every 5-10 years, or more frequently if there is concern on the population status.

The needed regularity of surveys and assessments were stock specific and was as dependant on the conservation status of the stock. Therefore SC 29 chose not to provide a general recommendation but agreed to set as a standard term of reference in any assessment to define the regularity of abundance surveys and assessment for each specific case (species/stock).

Comments from Parties for 3.1 and 3.2

Norway congratulated the SC for the good work done and informed that Norway supported to forward to Council the 8 principles for a precautionary management of stocks and the 3 criteria for prioritizing assessments recommended by the SC 29. The Faroe Islands and Iceland seconded Norway and supported that both the 8 principles and the 3 criteria be forwarded to Council with recommendation for adoption.

Greenland informed that they supported the 3 criteria but had concerns regarding the 8 principles.

Greenland concerns are expressed in the following statement:

*“Greenland noted that the final decision on agenda item 3.1. Precautionary approach will be made by the NAMMCO Council at its meeting by Council at the end of March 2023. Greenland can already endorse recommending for adoption by the Council the **principles 1, 5, 6 and 8.**”*

*With regard to **principles 2 and 3**, Greenland states that before a potential endorsement can be made, clarification is needed on how the stock ‘equilibrium in the absence of anthropogenic removals, disturbance and resource competition’ will be defined. Therefore, Greenland would like to ask the SC to clarify this. Greenland also seek clarification why 60% is used as a reference point for at which level should stocks be restored, when 70% is used by the ICES/NAFO/NAMMCO WGHARP, and also used in relation to narwhal and beluga. Clarification is needed on what this 60% has been chosen. Greenland noted that for instance Norway is using a tuning level of 62% for minke whale, while the tuning of the IWC is 72%.*

*Regarding **principle 4**, Greenland would like to ask the SC to explain where these two numbers come from; i.e., where does the SC definition of a small population comes from: ‘ <1000 individuals, unless there are more than 400 reproductive aged females in the population’. The reason to choose these numbers should be explained by the SC, as Greenland sees them very important, and so clarification is needed before principle 4 can be recommended for endorsement. In the understanding of Greenland, such definition is dependent on the species concerned, i.e., reproductive rate, survival, etc.*

*Regarding **principle 7**, Greenland considers the content of this principle as very wide, not very clear, and not telling which other management actions could be on the table. However, Greenland does not see principle 7 as a binding recommendation. Therefore, Greenland would also like the SC to further provide clarifications on this principle.”*

Norway expressed its disappointment that the MCJ could not reach consensus on recommending the adoption of the 8 principles, highlighting the significance and importance of the MC in the running of the Commission. Norway emphasised the importance of having received the necessary clarifications from the SC prior to the Council meeting and also for members to have the necessary mandates at the Council meeting in Tromsø at the end of March 2023, so a decision could be made. Iceland seconded the opinion of Norway.

The SC Chair, Aqqalu Rosing-Asvid, informed that the SC would make all efforts to respond in writing to the comments made by Greenland in its statement before the Council meeting.

MCJ Conclusion

The MCJ agreed to recommend to the Council to adopt the three criteria for prioritizing assessments of stocks, and that the regularity of surveys and assessments be proposed by the SC following the recommendation of the Working Groups performing an assessment.

The MCJ also agreed to recommend to Council to adopt the principles 1, 5, 6 and 8 defined by the SC for enhancing NAMMCO's precautionary approach.

The MCJ noted that principles 2, 3, 4 and 7 needed more clarification and thus did not reach consensus on forwarding to Council for adoption.

4. ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECOSYSTEM PERSPECTIVE

4.1 MARINE MAMMAL-FISHERIES INTERACTIONS

4.1.1 By-catch

Active requests to the Scientific Committee from the Council

- **Request 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.*

Updates from the Scientific Committee

In response to request R-1.1.5, the SC informed that the By-catch Working Group (BYCWG) continued its work and had held its 7th meeting on May 2022. The May meeting had focused on the first ToRs 'Identify all fisheries with potential by-catch of marine mammals' and determine how best assessing the risk of marine mammal by-catch for the fisheries in the waters of NAMMCO, as self-reporting by fishermen is deemed not reliable. The WG agreed that a first step towards a risk assessment would be to first conduct an initial scope of the fisheries data available (i.e., resolution of the data, type of effort data available, statistical area of reporting, time period available in the data, and how best to define a "fishery") and then send a data call to the fishery departments of the NAMMCO Parties. With this data, the BYCWG would be able to map the fishing effort to visualize its scale in relation with MM distribution/abundance and identify whether and where enhancing monitoring efforts were needed.

The Secretariat had contacted the fisheries departments of members countries requesting answers to six questions formulated by the BYCWG. However, at the time of the SC meeting (January 2023) only Greenland and Norway had responded.

Recommendations from the Scientific Committee

Iceland and Faroe Islands

- Provide an answer to the preliminary request [from the Secretariat/BYCWG] regarding their fisheries data so that the BYCWG can proceed with the data call.

Comments from Parties

Granquist informed that the Faroe Islands and Iceland had sent their responses to the Secretariat in the time span between the SC meeting and the MCJ meeting.

MCJ Conclusion

The MCJ encouraged the Parties to swiftly answer the data call when it is received.

4.2 ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Active requests to the Scientific Committee from the Council

- **Request R-1.1.10:** *In the light of the distributional shifts seen under T-NASS 2007 and later surveys, investigate dynamic changes in spatial distribution due to ecosystem changes and functional responses.*
- **Request 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.*
- **Request R-1.5.4:** *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 and recommendations from the Scientific Committee

In response to request R-1.1.10, several studies documented distributional shifts and hunters had also documented similar species shifts and changes. The SC is therefore seeking the guidance of the MC for a clarification on the status of this request, if it is considered answered or becoming a standing request. In addition, the SC requested the MC to specify the scope of the response that was expected.

To follow up on the issue, SC 29 recommended that, after NASS2024, the Abundance Estimate Working Group examine the best way of looking at distributional shifts using all NASS data, focusing on trends in species distribution and abundance.

Regarding request R-1.5.4, it was recommended that the MC considers this request answered, as impact of non-hunting anthropogenic stressors will remain a standard agenda item for all WG meetings, and any arising issues would then be reported to the SC.

In response to request R-1.5.3, reference was made to the Joint NAMMCO-JCNB Disturbance Workshop focusing on the impact of the Mary River and Dundas mining projects on marine mammals held in December 2022. A summary of this workshop would be presented under item 4.2.1.

Comments from Parties

Regarding request R-1.1.10, Norway noted that the research conducted under the ongoing MINTAG project would likely help provide answers to that request, also indicating that a review of existing studies documenting distributional shifts and changes could be a way forward to fully answer this request. Norway further suggested to consider this request as *standing* until the input from both MINTAG and NASS 2024 had been considered in the response.

Greenland, Iceland, and the Faroe Islands seconded Norway and supported that request R-1.1.10 be considered a standing request.

All members agreed to consider request R-1.5.4 as answered, as recommended by the SC.

MCJ Conclusion

The MCJ agreed that request R-1.1.10 be considered a standing request and request R-1.5.4 be considered as answered. The SC should prepare a review of the studies informing on distributional shifts and incorporate the information generated by NASS 2024 and the MINTAG project.

4.2.1 NAMMCO-JCNB Joint scientific Working Group Disturbance Workshop

The Chair invited Albert Chacón, Scientific Secretary, to present a summary of the Disturbance Workshop held by the NAMMCO-JCNB Joint Scientific working Group (JWG).

In December 2022, the JWG had organised a workshop to look at the effects of disturbance on narwhals, belugas, walrus, and other marine mammals of two mining operations in Baffin Bay: the Mary River Project in Baffin Island (Canada) and the Dundas mine project, in Wolstenholme Fjord

(North-West Greenland). Research results presented at the Workshop highlighted the sensitivity of narwhals to noise disturbance. The WS concluded that displacement of any summer aggregation of narwhals could be anticipated if sustained shipping activities were planned in the fjord or inlet used by an aggregation. The WS also warned of the negative impacts of shipping and mining activities on the energy budget and population dynamics of belugas, walrus and other arctic cetaceans and pinniped species.

Recommendations from the Scientific Committee

MCJ was asked to address two new recommendations for management under this item. Other, species-specific, management and research recommendations would be addressed by the MCC and MCSW.

New Recommendations for Conservation and Management

Greenland

- No ship anchoring should occur in Store Hellefiske Bank, off West Greenland, due to its importance as a feeding ground for many Arctic seabirds and marine mammal species.
- Greenland invites Canadian experts to participate in reviewing monitoring programs, plans and results of the Dundas mine in North-West Greenland.

Comments from Parties

In the light of results of the Disturbance Workshop, Greenland expressed concerns on the impact of shipping on narwhal, walrus, belugas, and bowhead whales, and proposed that the two recommendations be endorsed. Norway, Iceland and the Faroe Islands seconded Greenland and supported both recommendations.

As Greenland had underlined its concerns about the development of the mining projects, the General Secretary, Geneviève Desportes, suggested the MCJ to consider request R-1.5.3. as a standing request, so NAMMCO could continue monitoring the development of these mining projects. All countries supported this suggestion.

MCJ Conclusion

The MCJ agreed to forward to Greenland the two pieces of advice for Management and Conservation presented under this item and agreed to consider request 1.5.3. as a standing request.

4.3 MULTISPECIES APPROACH TO MANAGEMENT AND MODELLING

Active requests to the Scientific Committee from the Council

- **Request R-1.1.9 (ongoing):** *In addressing the standing request on ecosystem modelling and marine mammal fisheries interaction, to extend the focus to include all areas under NAMMCO jurisdiction.*
- **Request R-1.2.1 (ongoing):** *To consider whether multispecies models for management purposes can be established for the North Atlantic ecosystems and whether such models could include the marine mammal 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.*

Updates from the Scientific Committee

Because the best-known ecosystem models are focused on fish and using these models for marine mammals is considered extremely difficult at the moment, the SC recommended that responding to both requests 1.1.9 and 1.2.1 should not be considered a priority and request the guidance of the MCJ on this.

Comments from Parties

There were no comments.

MCJ Conclusion

The MCJ agreed with the SC recommendation that responding to requests R-1.1.9 and R-1.2.1 was not considered a priority.

5. USER KNOWLEDGE

The Chair referred to the decision at Council 29 (2022) to establish a special designated WG dealing with user knowledge and user involvement in NAMMCO. She drew attention to document NAMMCO/30/MC/07: 'Draft Terms of Reference for a Working Group on User Knowledge' noting that the MCJ was asked to review the draft ToRs and give their comments before the ToRs were presented to Council for consideration and adoption.

The Chair invited Charlotte Winsnes, Deputy Secretary, to present the ToRs of the Working Group on User Knowledge.

A small group had been established to draft terms of reference for such a WG. The group consisted of Ulla Wang (FO), Masaana Dorph (GL), Sandra Granquist (IS) and Arne Bjørge (NO), Geneviève Desportes and Charlotte Winsnes, from the Secretariat.

The proposed Terms of Reference were:

- To consider and give advice on how to best initiate, improve and strengthen users' involvement in NAMMCO to produce better decisions and strengthen the legitimacy of decisions. This will involve finding best practices on how to co-produce /co-create knowledge by stakeholders (users, scientists, managers) to obtain the best ecosystem-based management of marine mammals and their use by the societies that utilise them.
- Give concrete recommendations on how to advance the work and how to monitor the progress.
- The members should encompass representatives from the Parties and comprised users, natural and social scientists, experts on Indigenous Knowledge and rights in international processes, and managers.

Issues/topics that the WG should *inter alia* consider, and address were also given.

Comments from Parties

In response to a question from Norway on hunters' participation in the drafting of the ToR, Winsnes informed that this had not been the case but that they would be fully represented in the WG as reflected in the draft ToR.

Iceland expressed concern that it might be challenging to find representatives to sit in the WG but otherwise supported the presented ToR. No other comments were made, and all members supported the ToRs.

MCJ Conclusion

The MCJ did not have special comments to the ToR and supported they be presented to the Council.

6. UPDATE ON MEMBERS RESPONSES TO PROPOSALS FOR CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT

The Chair informed that updates from Parties on recent proposals for conservation and management and research recommendations were available in document NAMMCO/30/MC/05.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

No issues were raised under this agenda item.

8. CLOSE OF MEETING

The Chair thanked the participants for their attendance and contributions. The meeting was closed at 15:37 on 1st March 2023.

9. ADOPTION OF REPORT

A draft of the report was circulated on 6 March 2023 and was finalised and adopted on 17 March 2023.

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Jana Djukaric (Intern)
Charlotte Winsnes (Deputy Secretary)

APPENDIX 2: JOINT LIST OF DOCUMENTS OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES

Reference	Title	Agenda item
NAMMCO/30/08	Scientific Committee Report	MCJ, MCC, MCSW
NAMMCO/30/MC/01	Joint list of Documents for the Management Committees	MCJ, MCC, MCSW
NAMMCO/30/MCJ/02	Draft Annotated Agenda Joint Meeting of the Management Committees (MCJ)	MCJ
NAMMCO/30/MCC/03	Draft Annotated Agenda Management Committee for Cetaceans (MCC)	MCC
NAMMCO/30/MCSW/04	Draft Annotated Agenda Management Committee for Seals and Walrus (MCSW)	MCSW
NAMMCO/30/MC/05	List of Proposals for Conservation and Management and Recommendations for Research, with Responses from Parties	MCJ, MCC, MCSW
NAMMCO/30/MC/06	List of Active Requests from the NAMMCO Council to the Scientific Committee, with Responses from the Scientific Committee	MCJ, MCC, MCSW
NAMMCO/30/MC/07	Draft Terms of Reference WG on User Knowledge	MCJ
NAMMCO/30/MC/08	List of Participants	MCJ, MCC, MCSW
For Information Documents		

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

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