



## NAMMCO ANNUAL MEETING 31

# MEETING OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE FOR CETACEANS

19 March 2024, 17:20–18:00 & 20 March, 8:30–9:30  
Hotel Reykjavík Grand, Reykjavík, Iceland

### DRAFT ANNOTATED AGENDA

Annotations are indicated in *blue italics*. Recommendations by SC/30 are listed in the Appendix.

#### 1. CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS

##### Relevant Documents for this Meeting:

NAMMCO/31/08: Report of the 30th Meeting of the Scientific Committee

NAMMCO/31/MC/05: Proposals for Conservation and Management and Research Recommendations emanating from MCs 2023

NAMMCO/31/MC/06: Summary of Requests from the NAMMCO Council to the Scientific Committee and Responses by the Scientific Committee

This meeting will focus on:

- *Reviewing the new information on cetacean species and responses to active requests for advice provided by the Scientific Committee during its last meeting in 2024 (SC/30).*
- *Considering both the new and reiterated proposals for conservation and management and recommendations for research (that have implications for stock assessment and require management action by Member Countries) made by SC/30.*
- *Considering updates from the member countries on the proposals for conservation and management measures discussed by MC 30.*
- *Determining whether any requests may be considered completed and closed or need to be renewed.*

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

- *Endorse the SC proposals for conservation and management,*
- *Endorse the SC recommendations for research,*
- *Make recommendations to Council regarding the status of some requests,*
- *Propose to Council new requests to the Scientific Committee.*

The relevant **requests** (and year they were formulated) are given under the respective agenda items.

## 2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

## 3. CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT MEASURES FOR CETACEAN STOCKS

### 3.1 NARWHAL

*NAMMCO/31/08, item 10.1*

#### 3.1.1 Active request

- **R-3.4.11 (2008, standing):** *To update the assessment of both narwhal and beluga, noting that new data warrant such an exercise.*

#### 3.1.2 Response from SC/30

*R-3.4.11: The Joint NAMMCO-JCNB Working Group has not met since the last meeting of the MCC. For info: the JWG will meet in 2025. The Ad hoc Working Group on Narwhal in East Greenland (NEGWG) met on 12-15 December 2023 and reviewed the status of narwhal in East Greenland.*

#### 3.1.3 Recommendations for Conservation and Management

*See Recommendations 1 and 2.*

#### 3.1.4 Recommendations for Research

*See Recommendations 3–6.*

#### 3.1.5 SC Request for guidance

The SC requests guidance from the MCC on the need for continued monitoring and new assessments in light of an imminent extirpation scenario.

#### 3.1.6 MCC Discussion

*Note from Secretariat: As it is currently phrased, this request should be considered closed. Consider rephrasing standing request, e.g., “when new data warrant such an exercise”.*

### 3.2 BELUGA

*NAMMCO/31/08, item 10.2*

#### 3.2.1 Active request

- **R-3.4.11 (2008, standing):** *To update the assessment of both narwhal and beluga, noting that new data warrant such an exercise.*

#### 3.2.2 Response from SC/30

*The Joint NAMMCO-JCNB Working Group has not met since the last meeting of the MCC. The Ad hoc Working Group on Narwhal in East Greenland (NEGWG) met on 12-15 December 2023 and was tasked with reviewing the status of beluga in East Greenland.*

#### 3.2.3 Recommendations for Conservation and Management

*See Recommendations 7 and 8.*

#### 3.2.4 Recommendations for Research

*See Recommendation 9.*

### 3.2.5 SC Request for guidance

The SC requests further guidance from the MCC regarding future assessments of belugas in East Greenland, given that they cannot yet be considered a stock and there are no data on behaviour and movement parameters from which to draw useful conclusions.

### 3.2.6 MCC Discussion

*Same comment as for 3.1.6.*

## 3.3 WHITE-BEAKED, WHITE-SIDED, AND BOTTLENOSE DOLPHINS

*NAMMCO/31/08, item 10.4*

### 3.3.1 Active request

- **R-3.9.6 (renewed 2019, pending):** *To carry out assessments of dolphin species for which there are removals.*

### 3.3.2 Response from SC/30

*The Working Group on Dolphins met on 30 September–2 October 2023 and its main task was to conduct an assessment of the sustainability of the removals of *Lagenorhynchus* dolphins in the Faroe Islands, Iceland, and Greenland.*

### 3.3.3 Recommendations for Conservation and Management

*See Recommendations 10–13.*

### 3.3.4 Recommendations for Research

*See Recommendations 14–21.*

### 3.3.5 Management Areas

*The SC recommends the following (re)definition of Management Areas for:*

*White-beaked dolphin: i) West Greenland and Western Atlantic (provisional; pending genetic confirmation); ii) East Greenland and Iceland; iii) Northern Norway and Svalbard; and iv) Southern Norway and North Sea.*

*White-sided dolphin: Merge all Management Areas into a single unit, the Central North Atlantic.*

### 3.3.6 MCC Discussion

## 3.4 NORTHERN BOTTLENOSE WHALE

*NAMMCO/31/08, item 10.6*

### 3.4.1 Active request

- **R-1.7.11 (renewed 2019, ongoing)** *To develop estimates of abundance and trends as soon as possible once the [NASS 2015] survey has been completed.*

### 3.4.2 Response from SC/30

*The estimate of abundance and trends of bottlenose whales is the last and only one that has not been completed, pending analyses from Norway. A review of northern bottlenose whales could be conducted at SC/31, therefore the SC recommended that all members with pertinent data should provide it prior to that meeting.*

### 3.4.3 Recommendations for Conservation and Management

*See Recommendation 22.*

### 3.4.4 MCC Discussion

## 4. RECOMMENDATION ON THE RESEARCH NEEDED FOR UPCOMING ASSESSMENTS.

### 4.1 HARBOUR PORPOISE

*NAMMCO/30/08, item 10.3*

#### 4.1.1 Active request

- **R-3.10.1 (renewed 2019, ongoing):** *To perform an assessment of harbour porpoise throughout its range, which might include distribution and abundance, stock identity, biological parameters, ecological interaction, pollutants, removals, and sustainability of removals.*

#### 4.1.2 Response from SC/30

*The Working Group on Harbour Porpoise conducted an assessment of harbour porpoises off Norway in November 2022 and provided recommendations on the research and data needed for future assessments off Iceland and Greenland, as well as an updated assessment off Norway. The earliest possible assessment is likely in 2026.*

#### 4.1.3 Recommendations for Research

*See Recommendation 23.*

*Are the HPWG's recommendations being followed up on? (Faroe Islands: support creation of user observation App, initiate collection of biological data; Iceland: back-calculate by-catch estimates).*

#### 4.1.4 MCC Discussion

### 4.2 PILOT WHALE

*NAMMCO/30/08, item 10.5*

#### 4.2.1 Active request

- **R-3.8.6 (ongoing, 2011):** *To continue work to complete a full assessment of pilot whales in the North Atlantic and provide advice on the sustainability of catches, as soon as necessary further information becomes available, with particular emphasis on the Faroese area and East and West Greenland.*

#### 4.2.2 Response from SC/30

*The Working Group on Harbour Porpoise that met in November 2022 was tasked with providing recommendations on the research and data needed for the coming assessments. The SC has asked that the newly formed technical Working Group on Genetics provide guidance on the most appropriate analyses of Faroese genetic data.*

*As recommended by the SC, Council 30 agreed to postpone the meeting of the Pilot Whale Working Group to 2025, so the abundance estimates from NASS 2024 can be used as input to the assessment. Reminder from SC that the HPWG in 2022 recommended specific tasks to be carried out prior to the PW assessment. Are these (determine life history parameters, stock identity, and impacts of pollutants) being followed up on?*

**4.2.1 MCC Discussion**

**5. UPDATE ON MEMBERS' RESPONSES TO PROPOSALS FOR CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT**

*NAMMCO/31/MC/06*

**6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

## APPENDIX TO MCC AGENDA: SC/30 RECOMMENDATIONS

This list contains the recommendations endorsed by SC/30, grouped first by agenda item, then by type of recommendation, and finally by Party to which they are addressed. This includes recommendations given by Workshops and Working Groups, as well as the SC itself. Recommendations *prioritised by SC/30* are noted as such. “Recommendations for Research” refers only to those recommendations with implications for stock assessment and/or managers in Member Countries.

### 3.1 NARWHAL

#### Recommendations for Conservation and Management

##### Greenland

1. Zero catches should be allowed in all three Management Areas (***strongly reiterated***).
2. The next assessment of each Management Area should be conducted in 2026.

#### Recommendations for Research

##### Greenland

3. Deploy satellite tags on animals supplying the spring hunt in Management Area 1, as well as in Northeast Greenland, to investigate the range of the animals supplying the spring hunt.
4. Collect biological samples when available from East Greenland, including areas north of Scoresby Sound, to explore genetic connectivity of different stocks.
5. Investigate alternative methods to monitor depleted stocks (e.g., using targeted aerial surveys, passive acoustic monitoring, land-based surveys, mark-recapture, collecting incidental observations).
6. Conduct targeted aerial surveys of Kangerlussuaq, Nansen Fjord, southern Scoresby Sound, and other reported aggregation areas during summer of 2026.

### 3.2 BELUGA

#### Recommendations for Conservation and Management

##### Greenland

7. Zero removals should be allowed, in order to allow for the potential establishment of a new population of belugas in East Greenland, and to avoid removing animals that have potentially originated from the small and protected Svalbard stock (*prioritised by SC/30*).
8. The next assessment should coincide with the next narwhal assessment.

#### Recommendations for Research

##### Greenland

9. Collect incidental observations and biological samples when available, to monitor the occurrence of belugas in East Greenland (*prioritised by SC/30*).

### 3.3 WHITE-BEAKED, WHITE-SIDED, AND BOTTLENOSE DOLPHINS

#### Recommendations for Conservation & Management

##### All Parties

10. Considering the low levels of reported catch compared to the estimated population size, a new assessment of white-sided dolphins might be conducted within the standard 5-year period, integrating the 2024 abundance estimate, full catch reporting, and validated age structure information.

Multiple Parties

11. Maintain *total removals* below 750 white-sided dolphins per year across Greenland, Iceland, and the Faroe Islands.

Faroe Islands

12. Validate the completeness of the Faroese white-sided dolphin catches, focusing on the apparent lack of juveniles in the catch (*prioritised by SC/30*).

Greenland

13. Validate the Greenlandic removals with a special focus on minimising underreporting and estimating struck and lost rates, thus facilitating a full assessment of white-beaked dolphins as soon as possible (*high priority*).

**Recommendations for Research**All Parties

14. Deploy satellite tags on both white-sided and white-beaked dolphins, preferably in areas other than the Faroe Islands, to obtain more movement and dispersion data.

Faroe Islands (White-sided dolphins)

15. Investigate if there is older (i.e., 1986–1992) existing biological material from the Faroe Islands that could be processed and analysed, and to continue collecting relevant samples to investigate reproduction parameters and age structure.
16. Collect eye lenses to explore alternative age-determination methods.
17. Collect information from stranded animals, including age, length, and sex data.
18. Program satellite transmitters to collect higher resolution dive data at shallow depths to allow aerial survey availability correction factors to be estimated.

Greenland

19. Determine the stock identity of white-beaked dolphins in West Greenland, using increased genetic sampling and tagging efforts in Greenland (*prioritised by SC/30*).
20. To collect life history and age data from white-beaked dolphins in Greenland.

Iceland

21. Make existing and newly collected biological data (age and reproductive information) from Iceland available for the next white-beaked dolphin assessment.

**3.4 NORTHERN BOTTLENOSE WHALE****Recommendation for Conservation & Management**Greenland

22. Validate the reported catches of this species, as there appears to be misreporting (*prioritised by SC/30*).

**4.1 HARBOUR PORPOISE****Recommendation for Research**Iceland

23. Collect data on biological parameters, to facilitate an assessment of the Icelandic stock (*high priority*).