

NAMMCO MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE, COUNCIL 31

WORKING GROUP ON ENHANCING USER INVOLVEMENT IN NAMMCO DECISION MAKING (UIWG)

1 March 2024, online, 13:00 CET

The NAMMCO Working Group on enhancing User Involvement in NAMMCO Decision Making (UIWG) held a third online meeting on March 1, 2024. The meeting was chaired by Geneviève Desportes, in the absence of an appointed Chair for the Working Group (WG). The meeting agenda and list of participants are available in Appendix 1 and 2, respectively. Naima El bani Altuna was appointed as primary rapporteur of the meeting.

Desportes welcomed the participants and invited them to a round of introductions.

1. CASE STUDIES FOR USER INVOLVEMENT

The WG was presented with three projects that work with user involvement, either in the collection of data or throughout the scientific and managerial process.

Traditional and Contemporary Fishing and Hunting User Knowledge Centre – KNAPK

Vittus Qujaukitsoq introduced KNAPK's project to establish a User Knowledge Centre in Greenland. The project is currently in the fundraising phase, with funding applications submitted to both the Horizon EU framework and the Nordic Council of Ministers.

Summary:

The Traditional and Contemporary User Knowledge Center has following goals:

- To collect data, knowledge and contemporary user knowledge from fishers and hunters
- To coordinate collection of user knowledge amongst Inuit in the Arctic
- To collect knowledge in accordance the United Nations World Intellectual Property Organization manual and definition
- The primary goal is to interview fishers/hunters in writing, sound and/or video
- Results of the collected data are to be publicly available, once the project is finished with report etc.
- To arrange workshops and interviews of fishers/hunters
- To establish a library connected to the Traditional and Contemporary User Knowledge Center

KNAPK distinguish between Universal Inuit Knowledge, Traditional Knowledge, Regional Knowledge, Local Knowledge and User Knowledge.

KNAPK aim to make reports and results of the project available for North Atlantic Fisheries Organization, North Atlantic Marine Mammals Conservation Organization, North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission, North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization, International Whaling Commission and International Center for Exploration of the Sea and various relevant organizations under United Nations, IUCN and/or CAFF.

Greenlandic Ministry of Fisheries and Hunting's initiative to collect user knowledge

Amalie Jessen and Sofie Abelsen discussed the legal aspects surrounding the collection and use of hunter and user knowledge in Greenland in management processes. This included the section on hunter and user knowledge in the Hunting Law (no. 34 of June 23, 2023) and the draft Executive Order on the collection and

use of hunter and user knowledge. Abelsen provided an overview of the methods employed in a pilot case of the narwhal hunt in Ittoqqortoormiit (East Greenland) in 2021.

Experiences from structured stakeholder involvement in the research process, UIWG

John-André Henden presented the experiences from a scientific study aiming at investigating the population dynamics of ptarmigan in northern Norway in which several stakeholders were involved.

Summary:

In the case of the recently red-listed, but still harvested, population of Willow Ptarmigan in Northern Norway, the experience was that a protocol for structured stakeholder involvement constituted a highly functioning process for involving stakeholders in collaborative learning and modeling efforts for the purpose of identifying drivers of past and current dynamics, as well as for deriving predictions of the near future state of the population (Henden et al. 2020). Several positive and useful experiences have come from the collaborative process. Early involvement of all major stakeholders was decisive in providing legitimacy and trust in the objectives of the process and thereby for the focus and progress of the work, the success of the endeavor largely depended on the willingness of the people involved, and a strong focus on building social capital among all participants involved directly from the start was essential for building the trust needed to ensure an effective functioning among social groups with conflicting interests and values. Some recommendations based on the key lessons learned from several cases within a larger ecosystem project (SUSTAIN) in Norway were, 1) Start the stakeholder process as early as possible, preferably when the case study is elaborated and initiated, 2) Aim at building strong social capital and do not underestimate the time and willingness it will require to reach it — it takes time to establish trust, 3) Provide a diversity of occasions to meet and discuss, to ensure that various stakeholders will commit to the case and that their needs will be met as far as possible, 4) Use direct and dynamic communication channels and develop the communication plan with all actors involved and 5) Pay attention to stakeholder expectations and take rapid actions to fulfill them if possible (cf., Hamel et al. 2022).

Discussion following the three presentations:

The group commended the speakers for their presentations.

Desportes brought to the attention of the WG that the projects presented corresponded to different stages of processes involving stakeholders. In line with this, Desportes asked KNAPK what the protocol of including user knowledge in management processes will be once the knowledge database is established, and Qujaukitsoq highlighted that the goal of the Centre is to collate the existing data. After the data are collated, an Advisory Board will be tasked with defining how the data should be used and by whom. Henden underscored the importance of selecting protocols based on specific goals of the process, recognising the diversity of approaches available.

The WG discussed the requirements for a successful user involvement process, drawing from the experience of the 2021 survey on narwhal abundance in East Greenland. Jessen highlighted the critical need for all involved parties (i.e., hunters and scientists), to adhere strictly to agreed-upon plans and to transparently communicate the results of the survey.

Abelsen proposed the establishment of "Terms and Conditions" before initiating such collaborative processes. This suggestion aimed to prevent power imbalances throughout the process. In the event of disagreements, Jessen suggested the involvement of a mediator, not necessarily the UIWG, to assess the root causes of

disagreements (e.g., differences in the amount of counted narwhals by the hunters and scientists) and to develop strategies for resolution.

2. WORKPLAN

The Secretariat introduced a proposal for the species assessment for the next three years, which had been suggested by the Scientific Committee 30 in January 2024. The aim was for the WG to decide on the species to focus on, as previously agreed in the UIWG meeting in January 2024. However, the UIWG participants **agreed** that such a decision could not be made in the current meeting.

The WG **agreed** on the necessity to discuss further the workflow, organisation, and structure of the group before outlining a comprehensive workplan. Jessen emphasised that these discussions should align with the priorities of all parties involved in the process, taking into account the interests of the Ministries of the member Countries. This was particularly important for Greenland, whose waters host most of the species to be assessed in NAMMCO.

The WG **reiterated** the recommendation given in the previous meeting to focus the UIWG's efforts on a species-specific approach, and country-specific if relevant.

As a way forward, the WG **agreed** that they needed more time to decide what would be the best way of enhancing user involvement in NAMMCO decision making, and how the group should work. The WG **agreed** to conduct shorter but more regular meetings, each focusing on a specific topic. The WG agreed that the next meeting should take place before the summer of 2024, with the proposed theme centred around discussing how and in what ways user involvement can contribute to improving the overall decision making process.

3. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

No other business was discussed.

The meeting went over time by 30 minutes. The final report was recirculated and accepted by the group on 6 March, 2024.

REFERENCES

- Hamel, S., Ims, R.A. and Yoccoz, N.G. 2022. Challenges and opportunities when implementing strategic foresight: lessons learned when engaging stakeholders in climate-ecological research. *Climate Research*, Vol. 86: 29–35.
- Henden et al. 2020. End-user involvement to improve predictions and management of populations with complex dynamics and multiple drivers. *Ecological Applications*, e02120.



APPENDIX 1: AGENDA

- 1. CASE STUDIES FOR USER INVOLVEMENT**
- 2. WORKPLAN**
- 3. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

APPENDIX 2: PARTICIPANT LIST

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