NAMMCO ANNUAL MEETING 33

MEETING OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES FOR CETACEANS

24–26 March 2026
Hotel Hans Egede, Nuuk, Greenland

Annotated Draft Agenda

Annotations are shown *in blue and italics*. Requests are marked ***in bold italics***. Recommendations from the SC are presented in a blue box.

1. Chair's Opening Remarks

Relevant documents for this meeting:

- *NAMMCO/32/08: Report of the 32nd Meeting of the Scientific Committee*
- *NAMMCO/32/MC/05: Recent Proposals for Conservation and Management and Research Recommendations*
- *NAMMCO/32/MC/06: Summary of Requests from the NAMMCO Council to the Scientific Committee and Responses by the Scientific Committee*

For meeting aims, see NAMMCO/33/MC/02.

This meeting addresses issues of relevance to the Management Committee for Cetaceans (MCC). Only species with active requests or for which there is a recommendation from the SC are presented to the Management Committees, but all species are discussed by the Scientific Committee.

2. Adoption of Agenda

3. Conservation and management measures for cetaceans

3.1. Narwhal and beluga

NAMMCO/33/08, item 9.1

3.1.1. Active requests

- ***R-3.4.11 (standing, rephrased 2024)*** *To update the assessment of both narwhal and beluga, when new data warrant such an exercise.*
- ***R-3.4.15 (ongoing, 2024)*** *To prioritise investigating alternative survey methods and survey frequency for small stocks, with a focus on beluga and narwhal in East Greenland.*
- ***R-3.4.16 (ongoing, 2024)*** *To prioritise the collection and analysis of information to improve the understanding of stock structure of beluga whales in East Greenland, which may allow future assessments for this species in this area.*

3.1.2. Response from SC/32

R-3.4.11: New data are available to assess belugas and narwhal in West Greenland and the North Water in 2026. No new information is available for East Greenland.

R-3.4.15: There is a workshop on alternatives for classic cetacean survey methods planned for 2026, during which this topic can be explored.

*R-3.4.16: **This request cannot be completed, as there is no recognised stock in the area**. Current knowledge suggests that belugas in East Greenland are stragglers from other areas. No new samples are available to investigate this (no catches in recent years), but there is ongoing genetic analysis of previous samples.*

3.1.3. Recommendations for conservation and management

Greenland (narwhal)

- *(reiterated from SC/26 to SC/30)* Zero catches of narwhals in all three East Greenland Management Areas.

Greenland (beluga)

- *(reiterated from SC/30)* Zero catches of belugas in East Greenland.

3.1.4. MCC Discussion

3.2. Pilot whale

NAMMCO/33/08, item 9.2

3.2.1. 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*

3.2.2. Response from SC/32

R-3.8.6: A full assessment of long-finned pilot whales was completed in 2025. The SC propose changing this request to "standing", whereby the SC will determine the necessary frequency of assessments.

Suggested rephrasing: "To conduct a full assessment of pilot whales in the North Atlantic and provide advice on the sustainability of catches, as new information (data and analyses) render it pertinent".

3.2.3. Recommendations regarding removals

An annual total removal of 1570 pilot whales across the central and eastern North Atlantic allows the population to increase with 70% probability (the probability level applied in previous NAMMCO assessments). The current removals in all three hunts (average total of 956 animals in Faroe Islands, West and East Greenland, see below) are sustainable.

In relation to sustainability and to reduce the risk of local depletion, the WG recommends allocating future removals among the three hunting areas of West Greenland, East Greenland, and the Faroe Islands according to the average annual removals of the hunts during the last 10 years (i.e., from 2016 to 2025 for the Faroe Islands, and from 2015 to 2024 for Greenland). These average estimates are 679 for the Faroe Islands, 197 for West Greenland, and 80 for East Greenland (72 landed plus 10% struck and lost). With the overall summed annual removal being 956 animals, this implies a ratio of 1570/956 = 1.6 between the estimated maximum sustainable removals and the current takes in each area.

Owing to the opportunistic nature of all three hunts, the advice is best implemented as a five-year limit that should not exceed 5*1.6*679 = 5432 removals over five years in the Faroe Islands, 5*1.6*197 = 1576 removals over five years in West Greenland, and 5*1.6*80 = 640 removals over five years in East Greenland (corresponding to 1576 and 576 landings for West and East Greenland,

respectively). These recommendations assume no by-catch in the central and eastern North Atlantic. The advice should be reconsidered by the Scientific Committee, ideally within five years and no later than 10 years in the absence of new information.

3.2.4. Proposals for conservation and management

All Parties

- A survey to provide new information on abundance should be conducted within the next 10 years.
- More telemetry data should be collected from the Faroe Islands and additional areas across the North Atlantic to provide more representative geographical coverage. Tagging should aim to provide a more representative coverage of the whole year.

Faroe Islands

- Sampling and ageing of pilot whales should be conducted to provide a representative sample of the entire catch.

Greenland

- Undertake sampling for biological parameters from the drive hunts in West Greenland.
- Collect and analyse more genetic samples from West Greenland.
- Collect samples and conduct analyses to better inform stock definition in East and West Greenland (e.g., long-term telemetry, stable isotopes, contaminant levels).

Iceland

- Age existing tooth samples and collect data to inform biological parameters whenever possible.

3.2.5. Recommendations for Research with Implications for the Parties

All Parties

- *(Reiterated from SC/31)* Initiate a dedicated genetic monitoring programme based on archival and newly collected samples from harvested groups in Greenland and the Faroe Islands, as well as in mass stranding events wherever they occur, to determine:
  i. family groupings and social structure,
  ii. putative population of origin,
  iii. the influence of removing entire family units during pilot whale hunts, for instance in terms of genetic diversity, inbreeding levels, mutation load, and standing genetic variation.

3.2.6. MCC Discussion

3.3. Dolphins

NAMMCO/33/08, item 9.3

3.3.1. Active requests

- ***R-3.9.6 (ongoing, 2019)*** *To carry out assessments of dolphin species undergoing removals in the North Atlantic.*

3.3.2. Response from SC/32

R-3.9.6: The request cannot be answered for white-beaked dolphins until more information on struck and lost rates and genetic samples, from West Greenland in particular, are available. The SC will revisit information on white-beaked dolphins at its next meeting, as results of ongoing genetic analysis are expected.

3.3.3. MCC Discussion

For clarity, the MCC should consider splitting R-3.9.6 into species-specific requests, namely, for white-beaked dolphins, white-sided dolphins, and bottlenose dolphins.

3.4. Harbour porpoise

NAMMCO/32/08, item 9.4

3.4.1. Active requests

- ***R-3.10.1 (ongoing, 2019)*** *To perform a comprehensive assessment of the species throughout its range.*

3.4.2. Response from SC/32

R-3.10.1: A meeting of the Harbour Porpoise Working Group is scheduled for autumn 2026 to conduct this assessment.

3.4.3. MCC Discussion

3.5. Common minke whale

NAMMCO/33/08, item 9.9.

3.5.1. Active requests

Iceland requested an assessment and estimation of sustainable catch limits for minke whales in Management Area CIC.

3.5.2. Response from SC/32

A meeting of the WG on Large Whale Assessments was held in January 2026 and conducted a preliminary assessment of minke whales for management area CIC.

3.5.3. Recommendations regarding removals

The recommended catch limits for 2026 within the Small Area CIC are 134 whales (tuning level 0.6) or 86 whales (tuning level 0.72). These are recommended as interim catch limits until the NASS 2024 abundance estimates are finalised and incorporated into a full recalculation. In the absence of updated advice, the current advice can continue to be extended following the 20% phase-out per year.

3.5.4. Recommendations for conservation and management

- That NAMMCO approaches the IWC with a view to holding a joint workshop on common minke whale and fin whale population structure and movements in 2028. An online scoping workshop should be held in 2026 to discusses available data, analyses, and a workplan to ensure that the necessary information is available for the 2028 joint workshop.
- The analyses of existing and new material with respect to age, sex, reproductive status, and health should be undertaken by 2028, for both minke and fin whales.
- Implement systematic data collection and reporting schemes to improve reliability of data on by-catches and vessel strikes.
- Prioritise the allocation of funds in support of coordinated efforts to place cetacean observers on fishery vessels on an annual basis.

3.5.5. MCC Discussion

3.6. Fin whale

NAMMCO/32/08, item 9.10

3.6.1. Active requests

Iceland requested an assessment and estimation of sustainable catch limits for fin whales in Management Areas of relevance.

3.6.2. Response from SC/32

A meeting of the WG on Large Whale Assessments was held in January 2026 and conducted a preliminary assessment of fin whales for different management variants of relevance to Iceland.

3.6.3. Recommendations regarding removals

In the absence of updated advice, the current advice can continue to be extended following the 20% phase-out per year.

Both V3 and the sum of V7-WI and V7-EI/F yielded the same total catches:

- V3 catch limits 150 (0.6 tuning); 90 (0.72 tuning)
- V7 catch limits WI 116 EI/F 34 (0.6 tuning); WI 70 EI/F 21 (0.72 tuning).

The SC recommends either of these interim catch limits for 2026 until the NASS 2024 abundance estimates are finalised and incorporated into a full recalculation.

3.6.4. MCC Discussion

4. Update on members' responses to proposals for conservation and management

*NAMMCO/33/MC/05, **Category: Cetaceans**. Prior to the meeting of the MCs, each Party should take the time to read the updates provided by the other member countries. Any issues or uncertainties can be brought up for discussion during the meetings.*

5. Any other business