

Annex R

Report of the Working Group on Whale Sanctuaries

Members: Parsons (Chair), Bironga, Bjørge, Butterworth, Collins, Debrah, Gallego, Goodman, Herr, Holm, Iñiguez, Jimenez, Lang, Leaper, Lee, Lent, Lundquist, Mallette, Marcondes, Minton, Mwabili, Nelson, Panigada, Reeves, Reyes Reyes, Ridoux, Rojas-Bracho, Rose, Santos, Scheidat, Seyboth, Simmonds, Stachowitsch, Suydam, Svoboda, van de Water, Walløe, Walters, Weinrich, Zerbini.

1. INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

1.1 Introductory remarks

Parsons welcomed members to the Working Group.

1.2 Election of Chair

Parsons was elected Chair.

1.3 Appointment of Rapporteur

Rose was appointed rapporteur.

1.4 Adoption of Agenda

The adopted Agenda is given as Appendix 1.

1.5 Review of available documents

No documents were available for the Working Group to review.

2. REVIEW PROGRESS ON SOUTHERN OCEAN SANCTUARY MANAGEMENT PLAN

In the absence of the Australian delegation, there was no progress to review. This item will remain on the agenda to be considered at SC/68B.

3. RECEIVE NEW INFORMATION ON SANCTUARIES

3.1 Indian Ocean Sanctuary

Minton presented information on Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMA). The IMMA concept was developed by the IUCN Joint SSC/WCPA Marine Mammal Protected Areas Task Force (MMPATF) and is modelled on the successful example of the BirdLife International process for determining 'Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas'. The aim of the IMMA classification is to identify and delineate discrete habitat areas, important for one or more marine mammal species that have the potential to be managed for conservation. 'Important' in the context of the IMMA classification refers to any characteristic that extends a perceivable value to improve the conservation status of a marine mammal species or population.

IMMAs are intended for use as an information tool to assist in expert-led prioritisation of conservation effort. A three-stage process under the auspices of the MMPATF is used to identify, review, and accept or reject IMMA nominations, as follows:

- (a) Stage 1 - Nomination of initial 'Areas of Interest';
- (b) Stage 2 - Development of 'candidate IMMAs'; and
- (c) Stage 3 - Final review and IMMA Status Qualification.

For the period 2016-21, the MMPATF has been focusing on setting up a series of regional workshops to identify IMMAs, beginning with the Mediterranean in 2016. The Western Indian Ocean and Arabian Seas were the focus of the 2019 workshop, which took place 4-8 March. The workshop was held in Salalah, Sultanate of Oman, and involved 38 marine mammal scientists and observers from 15 countries, with several more scientists contributing to assessments and proposals remotely.

A total of 55 candidate IMMAs (cIMMAs) were identified, which is the largest number proposed from a single workshop to date. Thirteen areas of interest were identified as areas where further research is merited. The cIMMA proposals are now undergoing peer review, and those that are approved will be added to the eAtlas later in 2019. The working group welcomed this information relevant to the Indian Ocean Sanctuary.

Minton also reported that the IWC Bycatch Mitigation Initiative will likely result in more follow-up training and capacity building in the Indian Ocean region (see Annex J). She noted that there was an IndoCet (Indian Ocean Network for Cetacean Research) meeting taking place 8-12 July in La Réunion and an Indian Ocean Cetacean Symposium planned in the Maldives, to take place in July 2020. The Working Group welcomed this information and **encouraged** updates on these events at future meetings.

3.2 Southern Ocean Sanctuary

Parsons noted that members of the International Association of Antarctic Tour Operators (IAATO) voted at its recent annual meeting in Cape Town, South Africa, to adopt mandatory measures to mitigate ship strike risk from ship operations in the waters of the Antarctic Peninsula. From 2019, these measures will be enacted from 1 January-30 May in the Gerlache Strait and adjacent waters (between 63.65°S and 65.35°S), and from 1 February-30 May in the Marta Passage entering Crystal Sound (67.8°W to 67.0°W). The measures include adopting one of the following:

- (a) a 10kn speed restriction within the above area; OR, for IAATO Operators who have a whale strike mitigation training program; and
- (b) an extra watchperson on the bridge for the sole purpose of being on whale lookout within the area noted above.

This information was also discussed in the HIM sub-committee (see Annex J).

The working group welcomed this information. It was noted that, given that the location for SC/68B is the UK, there should be good representation of the British Antarctic Survey at the meeting; the Working Group therefore looks forward to additional updates on work in the Southern Ocean Sanctuary next year.

4. OTHER

No information was presented under this Agenda item.

5. WORK PLAN

With regard to the South Atlantic Sanctuary proposal, if progress is made at IWC/68, a discussion of that proposal

Table 1
Work plan for Sanctuaries.

Topic	Intersessional 2019	2020 Annual Meeting (SC/68B)
Consider new information related to the Southern Ocean Sanctuary Management Plan.	-	Cross-reference relevant information from other sub-committees and working groups.
Consider new information on other sanctuaries.	-	Prepare papers to be presented.
Provide responses to requests from the Commission on scientific aspects of sanctuaries.	-	Review and advise in report.

will be added to the agenda for SC/69A. In response to a question regarding whether the working group can do anything intersessionally to prepare for this outcome, it was noted that the review of the proposal at SC/66b (IWC, 2017a) concluded that the proposal at that time was robust scientifically and, absent substantial revisions, no further review from the Committee was necessary (IWC, 2017b, see e.g. pp.95-96). This conclusion also applied to the Management Plan, although the Committee agreed that additional details on implementation and performance measures would be needed if the proposal was adopted.

As the focus of the 2020 State of the Cetacean Environment Report (SOCER) is to be the Atlantic Ocean, it was noted that it (and previous reports) might contain information relevant to the South Atlantic Sanctuary proposal.

The Working Group requested that the Secretariat notify the Convenor intersessionally well before SC/68B if the South Atlantic Sanctuary Proposal is to be further addressed at IWC/68, so a discussion of any outcomes can be added to the working group agenda for SC/69A.

6. ADOPTION OF REPORT

The report was adopted by e-mail at 21.00hrs on 17 May 2019.

REFERENCES

- International Whaling Commission. 2017a. Report of the Intersessional Meeting to Review the South Atlantic Whale Sanctuary (SAWS) Proposal, 5-6 June 2016, Bled, Slovenia. *J. Cetacean Res. Manage. (Suppl.)* 18:593-602.
- International Whaling Commission. 2017b. Report of the Scientific Committee. *J. Cetacean Res. Manage. (Suppl.)* 18: 1-109.

Appendix 1

AGENDA

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| 1. Introductory items | 2. Review progress on Southern Ocean Sanctuary management plan |
| 1.1 Introductory remarks | 3. Receive new information on sanctuaries |
| 1.2 Election of Chair | 4. Other |
| 1.3 Appointment of rapporteurs | 5. Work plan |
| 1.4 Adoption of Agenda | 6. Adoption of Report |
| 1.5 Review of available documents | |