

RESOLUTION 7.12**SHIP STRIKES**

The Meeting of the Parties to the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area:

Recalling the ACCOBAMS Resolutions 5.11 and 6.19,

Taking into consideration Recommendation 12.5 “Ship strikes” of the 12th ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee Meeting,

Reiterating that the issue of ship strikes, particularly affecting large whales, such as fin and sperm whales, remains of concern within the ACCOBAMS Area,

Aware that the speed, rather than the shape or displacement, of vessels is the most significant factor in ship strikes,

Noting that the only effective measures to avoid serious injury and death of cetaceans from ship strikes at present are (a) avoidance by ships of areas or times with high density of whales, including the establishment of shipping lanes or non-shipping zones, and (b) speed reductions in such areas or times, slowing ships down to speeds below 10-12 knots,

Noting also that speed restrictions can also reduce underwater noise and greenhouse gas emissions that can assist with meeting other international targets,

Recalling IMO Guidelines (MEPC.1/Circ.833) for the reduction of underwater noise from commercial shipping to address adverse impacts on marine life and, in particular, paragraph 10.5 “Rerouting and operational decisions to reduce adverse impacts on marine life”, recommending speed reductions or routing decisions to avoid sensitive marine areas, including well-known habitats or migratory pathways when in transit, that will help to reduce adverse impacts on marine life,

Aware that the volume of shipping traffic will continue to increase substantially in the near future,

Recalling the joint IWC (International Whaling Commission) - ACCOBAMS Workshop on Reducing Risk of Collisions between Vessels and Cetaceans, held in Beaulieu, France, in 2010,

Stressing that the highest priority is the collection and reporting of data, including near misses, to the Global Ship Strikes Database hosted by the IWC, which will both facilitate a proper evaluation, prioritisation and monitoring of ship strikes as a threat to various populations and regions, and assist in the development of mitigation measures,

Recognizing the present effective collaborative work with the IWC Scientific and Conservation Committees on the issue of ship strikes,

1. *Encourages* Parties to:
 - (a) consider the recommendations from the “joint IWC-IUCN-ACCOBAMS workshop on how the data and process used to identify Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs) can assist in identifying areas of high risk for ship strikes” (6-7 April 2019, Messinia, Greece) as presented in Annex of the present Resolution, and more particularly regarding (i) the process for the designation of a PSSA by IMO at a scale that includes the North West Mediterranean Sea, Slope and Canyon IMMA, plus potentially the Spanish corridor, and (ii) risk reduction measures in the Hellenic Trench;
 - (b) take note of the recommendations and advices resulting from other initiatives, such as the drafting of a Conservation and Management Plan for Mediterranean fin whales, the project to “develop and evaluate mitigation strategies to reduce the risk of ship strikes to fin and sperm whales in the Pelagos Sanctuary” and any other relevant projects such as “SICOMAR plus” in the ACCOBAMS Area;
 - (c) begin to integrate speed reduction of vessels into port policy strategies, but also when approaching the port and within key areas (e.g. Marine Protected Areas, SPAMIs, Cetacean Critical Habitats, IMMAs, etc.) at times of the year when large whales might be present;
 - (d) develop incentive programmes to promote the application of speed and greenhouse gas emission reduction measures by ships / operators within the ACCOBAMS region;
 - (e) submit a proposal for Traffic Separation Schemes (TSS) in zones where there is scientific evidence regarding their effectiveness as mitigation measure, such as the Hellenic Trench, as recommended by the IWC Scientific Committee, by the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee through Recommendation 10.6 and in Resolution 6.19 adopted by the Parties in 2016;
 - (f) support the undertaking of a project within the next triennium identifying areas of potential conflict (Cetacean Critical Habitats) where there are main shipping lanes / maritime traffic cross sensitive / important habitats (IMMAs) for large cetacean species (sperm and fin whales) in the Agreement area, following methods developed by the initiatives referred to under (a);
 - (g) consider other IMO measures to mitigate ship strikes through the ACCOBAMS area;
2. *Recommends* to the Parties that they continue to support projects that will improve knowledge of ship strikes and potential mitigation strategies, including telemetry and photo-identification studies;
3. *Strongly encourages* Parties to submit information on ship strikes to the Global Ship Strikes database hosted by the IWC, which has streamlined the data entry process with advice from members of the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee and others;
4. *Encourages* the Scientific Committee and its relevant Working Group to facilitate reporting to, and feedback from, IWC Global Database;
5. *Asks* the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee to:
 - investigate existing data to determine the efficacy of undertaking a spatial modelling exercise for fin whales in the Mediterranean for comparison with information on shipping traffic;
 - continue to monitor high risk areas for ship strikes in the Mediterranean Sea (the Strait of Gibraltar, the Pelagos Sanctuary, the area south west of the island of Crete, the area around the Balearic Islands, the area between Almeria and Nador at the eastern side of the Alborán Sea and the Strait of Sicily);
 - suggest and facilitate implementation of the IMO or national mitigation measures (PSSA, TSS, ATBA) in selected areas;
 - facilitate the scientific evaluation of the efficacy of tools to prevent and mitigate ship strikes, in the next triennium;

6. *Asks* the Scientific Committee and the Permanent Secretariat to continue to work with the IWC, the European Cetacean Society, ASCOBANS and other relevant Organisations in finalising necropsy protocols to identify causes of death, including those in relation with ship strikes;
7. *Charges* the Permanent Secretariat and the Scientific Committee to evaluate the feasibility and develop a “whale safe” certificate to be delivered to shipping companies adopting suggested mitigation measures to reduce ship strike risk;
8. *Recommends* that the collaborative work with the IWC Scientific and Conservation Committees continues, along with collaboration with CMS, IMO, ASCOBANS and other relevant International Organizations;
9. *Decides* that the present Resolution replaces Resolutions 5.11 and 6.19.

ANNEX

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE JOINT IWC-IUCN-ACCOBAMS WORKSHOP TO EVALUATE HOW THE DATA AND PROCESS USED TO IDENTIFY IMPORTANT MARINE MAMMAL AREAS (IMMAS) CAN ASSIST IN IDENTIFYING AREAS OF HIGH RISK FOR SHIP STRIKE

(6-7 April 2019: Messinia, Greece)

1- Best practice guidelines for future determination of high-risk ship strike areas for cetaceans

The workshop **agreed** that Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs) represent a systematic and biocentric approach to identifying important habitats, and that as such they can be helpful in identifying potential high-risk areas for ship strikes. In particular, if an IMMA contains a species or population that is vulnerable to ship strikes, and it is transited by significant shipping, the area can be “flagged” for further investigation and potential mitigation.

Acknowledging that there is currently no universal technological solution to prevent ship strikes, the group **recommended** that the best overall, current mitigation measures, are to voyage plan to avoid high risk areas or, if they cannot be avoided, restrict speed to 10 knots, which has been shown to be an effective speed to reduce fatal collisions with most large whales (Vanderlan and Taggart, 2007; Conn and Silber, 2013; Laist *et al.*, 2014).

The workshop **recommended** the following steps are undertaken by the IWC Ship Strikes Working Group and the IWC Scientific Committee as part of a process to identify High Risk Areas for Ship Strikes based on IMMAs:

Traffic information (e.g. Types of vessel, size, speed, flag, etc.): plotting major ship routes and see if they cross IMMAs which host significant or high-density populations of species that are threatened and/or vulnerable to ship strikes.

- Recommend analysing spatial patterns of traffic levels in IMMAs to examine the potential for management of vessel traffic within an IMMA.
- Recommend working with relevant agencies (e.g. National Coast Guard offices) that hold this information, for access to shipping data including vessels that are not equipped with AIS.
- Recommend analyses to estimate the proportion of vessel traffic that is not equipped by AIS (e.g. using remote sensing data).

Species information (e.g. Relative abundance, status, Animal Behaviour/seasonality/key lifecycle use in and within IMMAs)

- Recommend presenting risk analysis in a way that allows comparisons between areas (e.g. Redfern *et al.* 2013; Bezamat *et al.* 2014; Priyadarshana *et al.* 2016; Rockwood *et al.* 2017).
- Recommend when an IMMA is “flagged” that modelling of data within IMMA is conducted for a more refined estimate of risk (e.g. correct for effort at a minimum, etc.).
- Recommend possible use of tracking and/or behavioural profiling data to further refine risk assessment in the IMMA.

If this cannot be done, the group recommends a review of documented behaviours, preferably within the IMMA (e.g. surface feed or deep, social, travel, etc.).

Where dive profile data exist, these should be used in an approach similar to (Silber *et al.* 2010) to estimate the proportion of time at depths of high risk for types of vessel operating in the area.

Investigate stranding data near “flagged” IMMA including drift modelling to estimate locations of strikes.

Investigate availability of distribution data of at-risk species within and around the IMMA, if shipping may be re-routed into other areas. Also, investigate other unintentional consequences of the move (e.g. other species, safety, human activities, etc.)

Management and Mitigation

Where a High-Risk Area has been identified as requiring management action, the workshop **recommended** the following steps in developing a mitigation strategy:

- Recommend identifying and engaging with shipping “nodes” (e.g. big company “command centers”, port meetings, etc.).
- Recommend a collaborative approach with stakeholders, prior to going to the IMO (if warranted).
- Recommend maintaining a feedback loop with shipping will help encourage and sustain success.

2- Recommendations to the IWC in relation to its ongoing scientific work on the topic, and the implementation of its Ship Strikes Strategic Plan.

The workshop **recommended** that, subject to funding, the IWC, working with the IUCN MMPA Task Force and the CMS and its daughter agreements, undertake an initial analysis of global IMMAs, overlaid with shipping data, to identify potential high risk areas, taking into consideration the outputs of the workshop (Ships Strikes Working Group; IWC Scientific Committee; IUCN MMPATF; ACCOBAMS; CMS). The group recommends that the IWC Secretariat develop a costed proposal and seek funds to accomplish this (IWC Secretariat)

The workshop **recommended** that the IWC Ship Strikes Working Group develop case studies to demonstrate the benefits, anticipated and actual costs of measures introduced to reduce ship strikes. The workshop **recommended** that the IWC Secretariat consider whether an intern could be recruited to support the development of these case studies.

3- Opportunities for engagement with other Organisations

The workshop **suggested** that Simone PANIGADA become the liaison between the IWC Scientific Committee and Conservation Committee, ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee, the CMS and the IUCN MMPA Task Force.

4- Other future work needed

The workshop **agreed** that IMMAs could potentially be used to identify high risk areas for other threats, including combined threats, e.g. bycatch and noise. The workshop noted that some measures may help address multiple threats (e.g. keeping vessels and whales apart and/or reduced vessel speed may reduce ship strikes and noise impacts). The workshop requested the IWC Scientific Committee consider this issue.

The workshop **recommended** that the IWC Scientific Committee and the IUCN MMPA Task Force review the potential uses of the IWC databases (e.g. historical catch, sightings, strandings etc) in helping to identify Areas of Interest (AOI) for future surveys, and for the verification of the longevity of IMMAs.

Reinforcing the IWC67b Scientific Committee recommendation which “recommends continued work to develop and evaluate mitigation measures, such as speed restrictions, that might be associated with the designation of a Particularly Sensitive Sea Area (PSSA) in the Pelagos Sanctuary area“, the workshop **recommended** to the **ACCOBAMS Secretariat and ACCOBAMS Parties** to further develop the process for the designation of a PSSA by IMO at a scale that includes the North West Mediterranean Sea, Slope and Canyon IMMA, plus potentially the Spanish corridor, to take into account whale population movement and distribution. Zoning within the area with ship strike mitigation tools such as speed reduction and routing measures could be proposed as part of Associated Protective Measures within the PSSA. The ACCOBAMS Permanent Secretariat welcomes this recommendation.

The workshop **recommended** that the Greek Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Insular Policy work with other Greek Ministries (e.g. Ministry of Environment and Energy) and relevant stakeholders including the shipping industry, the European Commission and other countries, NGOs, IGOs and scientists to put in place risk reduction measures in the Hellenic Trench and submit a formal proposal by 2020 to the IMO for approval. In order to facilitate this process, a short document providing specific risk reduction options could be prepared by relevant experts to provide the necessary information.