
Report of the Working Group on Whalewatching (Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Mexico, South Africa, United Kingdom, and United States)

Submitted to the IWC62 Conservation Committee

WORKING PAPER: WHALEWATCHING – BRINGING TOGETHER SCIENCE, MANAGEMENT AND CAPACITY BUILDING

DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN 2010 – 2015

BACKGROUND

At IWC61 in Madeira, the Conservation Committee endorsed the report *Whalewatching – bringing together science, management and capacity building* (IWC/61/CC9). The report acknowledged that the IWC was in an ideal position to provide support to the many countries looking to realise the benefits of whalewatching for their communities, regions and nations. Whilst much work has been done on the scientific aspects of whalewatching, it was considered that much more work could be done to develop practical management tools to guide responsible practices. The paper proposed a framework for a future work program based on three key elements: Research and Assessment, Management, and Capacity Building and Development.

Following endorsement by the Conservation Committee, the Standing Working Group on Whalewatching ('Working Group') was established to progress the recommendations of the report, including the preparation of a five-year strategic plan. The group met on 5 March 2010, following the intersessional meeting of the IWC in St Petersburg, Florida.

This preliminary strategic plan identifies the main priorities for the Working Group over the five-year period, 2010 to 2015.

AIMS OF THE WORKING GROUP

By 2015 the Working Group aims to provide a clear and concise suite of tools to assist countries to assess the opportunities for sustainable whalewatching activities and to help governments and managers develop and implement best practice approaches to whalewatching management.

Importantly the Working Group will provide practical guidelines for member states seeking to identify the real potential of whalewatching to contribute to the socio-economic growth of their communities and to exploit that potential sustainably, consistent with a precautionary approach.

The Working Group will, through dialogue and engagement, identify and articulate the critical policy, research and management steps that need to be taken at different levels to support the development of economically viable and environmentally sustainable whalewatching industries, based on open and honest communication between all stakeholders.

The Working Group will develop practical guidelines to assist countries seeking to establish robust and accountable governance frameworks for their whalewatching industries; to put in place rigorous and practical conservation measures to ensure the sustainability of their industries for the future; and to build strong and enduring relationships with their marine scientific communities to ensure that whalewatching activities are supported by appropriate scientific inputs. In exploring strategies to improve the linkage between research and on the ground management activities, the IWC Scientific Committee subcommittee on whalewatching will be a valuable resource.

Over the next five years the Working Group will develop the tools necessary to assist and empower countries to implement the three core elements in building sustainable whalewatching industries.

Research and Assessment

The Working Group proposes developing a web-based template to assist countries to undertake a rigorous assessment of the opportunities for responsible whalewatching activities in their region or country.

The template will set out, in a user friendly format, the nature of the information that is required to assess the feasibility and potential impacts of whalewatching activities and include suggestions as to how such information could be cost-effectively collected. An assessment of the latest science and the work of the Scientific Committee subcommittee on whalewatching, particularly in regard to the Large-Scale Whalewatching Experiment (LaWE), will help to inform this template.

The template will provide a guide for countries undertaking such assessments to:

- identify and prioritise areas for assessment;
- identify the full range of ecological, social, economic and infrastructure information required;
- undertake necessary cooperation and liaison between conservationists, local communities, managers and other stakeholders to ensure the range of relevant interests are taken into account; and
- analyse and assess the outcomes.

Management

The Working Group proposes the development of best practice guidelines and model policy frameworks to provide practical guidance and support for managers. These guidelines and model frameworks will draw on world's best practice, and will provide case studies of areas with a history of responsible and effective management.

The guidelines aim to assist governments to identify, develop and implement governance arrangements appropriate to their needs.

The guidelines would aim to assist governments and managers identify:

- the key elements of effective management of responsible whalewatching management;
- the appropriate management actions for their situation;
- how particular impacts of whalewatching can be effectively managed in a precautionary way;
- under what circumstances the implementation of regulatory approaches would be likely to deliver better management outcomes; and
- appropriate and cost-effective monitoring regimes, which could be applied on a case by case basis.

The guidelines would also assist current managers in both developed and developing countries to assess their effectiveness in achieving sustainability objectives, to identify gaps in current policy and practice and to implement change.

Capacity Building and Development

The Working Group will identify methods to facilitate the exchange of expertise and support between countries with developed whalewatching industries and those with less developed operations. Whilst recognising that each country will have unique considerations, much can be learned from others to facilitate the development of responsible whalewatching industries.

Actions may include:

- provision of expert assistance, including through the Scientific Committee subcommittee on whalewatching;
- creation of networks to assist the development of new industries based on geographical or species related similarities (e.g. formation of international marketing groups);
- strengthened engagement between countries which 'share' whale populations (in a similar way to creating 'twin' or 'sister' cities);
- sharing of resources, such as communication plans and educational material;
- workshops to encourage information sharing; and
- online information sharing.

PROCESS

The Working Group will undertake an assessment of what tools and information communities need and the most effective way to deliver this support, through engagement with scientific, management and conservation experts, industry, governments and interested communities initially through a workshop in late 2010.

The workshop will have a practical focus and engage experts and communities on the three key themes. The outcomes will inform the development of the final strategic plan with a set of goals and actions, to be submitted to IWC63. A preliminary outline for the workshop is at Annex I.

Working Group on Whalewatching **17 May 2010**

IWC WORKSHOP ON WHALEWATCHING: PRELIMINARY OUTLINE

Towards the development and management of responsible whalewatching activities

The purpose of the IWC Workshop on Whalewatching is to bring together experts from research, management and industry and interested communities to begin a discussion on the three key themes for responsible whalewatching activities and identify the goals and products to be achieved as part of the five-year strategic plan.

The workshop will have a practical focus and seek to identify simple and effective ways to respond to key questions from countries seeking support in the development of sustainable whalewatching. These questions could include:

- *How can I assess the potential for a responsible whalewatching industry in my country?*
- *What can I learn from others about the type of regulation and management that is necessary to ensure responsible whalewatching activities?*
- *How have local communities in different parts of the world approached the development of whalewatching activities and what have been the challenges and benefits?*

Workshop themes

Robust, economically viable and ecologically sound whale watching activities must involve an integration of good science and information, appropriate management and a core of people interested in realising opportunities for their communities. The workshop will facilitate the exchange of expert advice, research and a range of experiences in relation to the main questions under the three key themes: Research and Assessment, Management, and Capacity Building and Development;

Research and Assessment

- What information, tools and support is available for communities looking to assess the opportunities for responsible whalewatching activities in their region or country?
- What is the critical information required to assess the level of investigation required to determine the sustainability of operations?
- What guidelines are available to implement to minimize the potential for causing an impact on cetacean populations?

Management

- What are the key elements of effective management of responsible whalewatching and how can managers quickly identify the appropriate management actions for their situation?
- How can particular impacts of whalewatching be effectively managed in a precautionary way and in what circumstances is the implementation of regulatory approaches likely to deliver better management outcomes?
- How can current managers assess their effectiveness in achieving sustainability objectives and implement change?
- Are there generic management guidelines that can be implemented effectively in new whalewatching enterprises?

Capacity building and development

- What is the global experience in facilitating development of responsible whalewatching industries?
- What are communities and countries seeking in relation to tools and support to promote good decisions about initiation of whalewatching industries?
- How can countries with expertise, resources and a desire to assist be involved in the development of whalewatching industries in other countries?

Each theme will address key areas of practical interest to many countries and will include the presentation of case studies on experiences, challenges and successes from around the world. Communication, education, and strategies for improving linkages between research and on the ground management, will also be explored in these discussions.

Aims and deliverables

The workshop will initiate the five-year strategic plan for the Working Group on Whalewatching by identifying a set of short-term, medium-term and long-term goals and actions relating to the key questions, to be submitted to IWC63. The goals and actions will identify what products will be developed and who will produce them, future meetings and workshops, and reporting requirements.

In initiating this work, the workshop also aims to provide a platform for building lasting relationships between researchers, governments, industry and communities interested in sustainable whalewatching.

Participation

Invitations to the workshop will be circulated through the IWC and will seek the participation of a broad range of stakeholders, including scientific, management and conservation experts, industry, governments and interested communities with emerging and existing whalewatching activities.

Planning and organization

The workshop will be held in Buenos Aires, Argentina in November 2010. A Steering Committee has been established to oversee preparations for the workshop and comprises IWC representatives from Argentina, Australia, United Kingdom, and the United States. The Steering Committee will report to the Working Group on Whalewatching.