

Report of the intersessional meeting on the North Pacific Survey Programme

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1. OPENING REMARKS AND WELCOMING ADDRESS

Kato, as convenor, welcomed the participants. He noted that the meeting was being held in the context of the recently changed Japanese political situation, with a new government, whose funding priorities were not yet known. Currently, all budgets are frozen. It was important that detailed plans for a programme in the North Pacific were available as soon as possible, for presentation to government at the appropriate time.

On behalf of the Fisheries Agency of the Japanese Government, Uoya welcomed all participants, especially the visitors from overseas. He urged the meeting to give shape, as far as possible, to the proposed North Pacific sighting survey programme. He drew attention to the uncertainty of obtaining the necessary budget in the current situation, although he was hopeful that the same level of support would be available as for the most recent SOWER cruise. He looked forward to a fruitful and successful meeting.

Meeting participants are listed in Annex A.

2. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND RAPPORTEURS

Kato was elected Chair. Bannister and Donovan acted as rapporteurs.

3. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

The agreed agenda is given as Annex B.

4. ORGANISATION OF THE MEETING

The meeting **agreed** that a small technical subgroup under Donovan should undertake the in-depth consideration of the details of the priority items discussed at the Madeira meeting (IWC SC61: Annex G, p3 and Appendix 2). The report of that sub-group was accepted by the full group and is incorporated into this report under Items 8, 10 and 11.

5. REVIEW OF AVAILABLE DOCUMENTS

A list of documents available appears as Annex C.

6. REVIEW OF DISCUSSIONS AT IWC 61

The meeting reviewed discussions in the Scientific Committee in Madeira (IWC/61/Rep1, Item 10.9). There, a proposal for a mid- to long-term research programme involving sighting surveys to provide information for stock management in the North Pacific, sponsored by the Japanese Government, had been presented. The first research cruise was planned for July-August 2010, with planning for the cruise to be undertaken in conjunction with the 2009/10 SOWER planning meeting, i.e. at this meeting.

The Committee had welcomed the initiative and strongly encouraged it in the context of international collaboration under IWC auspices. Attention was drawn to the similarity in the design process to that of the ACCOBAMS Mediterranean sighting surveys (Cañadas *et al.*, 2006, 2008) and the Southern Ocean Research Partnership (SORP - see SC/61/O16). A number of points to be considered in planning the programme had been identified (see IWC/61/Rep 1, Item 10.9, p 56).

7. TERMS OF REFERENCE AT IWC61

The meeting noted the four terms of reference agreed at the Madeira meeting, and the documentation available at this meeting. The terms of reference were:

- 7.1. Review the Committee's issues in the North Pacific and circulate a paper before the next (2010) Annual Meeting.
- 7.2. Review the past and ongoing survey activities and available data in range states from completed *pro formas*
- 7.3. Consider possible line transect survey plans and additional data collection (e.g. photo ID and biopsy) for the 2010 season
- 7.4. Prepare a proposal for an intersessional workshop (between SC/62 and SC/63) on future surveys beyond 2010.

The four terms of reference were discussed under Agenda Items 8-11, as below.

8. REVIEW DOCUMENT OF THE COMMITTEE'S IDENTIFIED ISSUES FOR LARGE WHALES IN THE NORTH PACIFIC

The meeting was pleased to receive a first draft of some aspects of the document required for the next Annual Meeting by Matsuoka and Pastene. This had focussed on sei, Bryde's and common minke whales (because these species have been under consideration by the Committee either via the RMP *Implementation* process and/or possible in-depth assessments) and the authors had noted that the final document must also include the other large whale species. It was **agreed** that the work on the document would be continued intersessionally by a group comprising, Matsuoka, Pastene, Kitakado, Donovan and Brownell; the final version will be made available in advance of IWC62. After review by the Committee it will form a valuable background document for the proposed intersessional workshop (see Item 13).

9. REVIEW OF THE PAST AND ONGOING SURVEY ACTIVITIES AND AVAILABLE DATA

At IWC61, Donovan had provided the *pro forma* developed to summarise the available information when planning for a similar programme for the Mediterranean

and Black Seas. This had been used by Japanese and US scientists as the basis for a summary of their data. The meeting thanked them for their work and, after reviewing their submissions (WP2) agreed to a modified final *pro forma*. In addition Pastene and Donovan agreed to develop an equivalent *pro forma* for information and data relevant to stock structure issues.

It was agreed that the revised *pro formas* should be completed in time for the proposed intersessional workshop and should include all major research programmes (governmental and other) dealing with large whales to the extent possible. Donovan agreed to circulate the revised *pro forma* to appropriate scientists in those range states that were not present at this meeting. The *pro forma* will also be made available on the IWC website. The completed forms will provide essential background information for the proposed intersessional workshop to develop a medium-long term research programme (see Item 13).

10. INITIAL CONSIDERATION OF MEDIUM-LONG-TERM OBJECTIVES

The meeting **agreed** that it was useful to have a brief consideration of possible medium- to long-term objectives for an international collaborative programme under the IWC for the North Pacific. In doing so it considered the report of the workshop to look at the 'future of SOWER' (ref). It **agreed** that the long-term objective developed there and subsequently adopted by the Committee provided a useful starting point. It thus **suggests** to the Committee the following draft broad objective within which sub-objectives and priorities will need to be developed (e.g. at the intersessional workshop discussed under Item 13):

The programme will provide information to allow determination of the status of populations (and thus stock structure is inherently important) of large whales that are found in North Pacific waters and provide the necessary scientific background for appropriate conservation and management actions. The programme will primarily contribute information on abundance and trends in abundance of populations of large whales and try to identify the causes of any trends should these occur. The programme will learn from both the successes and weaknesses of past national and international programmes and cruises, including the IDCR/SOWER programme.

11. PRIORITY AND CRUISE PLAN FOR 2010

11.1 Framework for the cruise

For the following reasons the meeting **agreed** that the cruise could be considered to be a joint IWC/Japan collaborative venture, although almost entirely funded by Japan:

- (1) the positive discussions in Madeira;
- (2) that at least one international researcher taking part (expected to be from the USA with US funding by the US Government);
- (3) the contribution to the planning made by the international scientists present at this meeting (see below) was provided in the same way as for SOWER cruises;
- (4) all guidelines for surveys under the RMP will be followed;
- (5) data will be freely available and biopsy samples will be split in the same manner as for the SOWER cruises.

11.2 Priorities

The meeting reviewed that information provided in WP2 and WP4 as well as drawing on the experience of the participants. It was **agreed** that the area between 170°E and 170°W was important for two main reasons:

- (1) it has been poorly covered by previous surveys and not at all in recent decades thus representing an important information gap for several large whale species;
- (2) for at least some species it spans proposed stock boundaries.

Thus the meeting **agreed** that a research cruise in this area in the summer of 2010, focussing on the collection of line transect data to estimate abundance¹ and biopsy/photo-identification data, would make a valuable contribution to the work of the Scientific Committee on the conservation and management of populations of large whales in the North Pacific in a number of ways, including:

- (1) providing information for the proposed future in-depth assessment of sei whales in terms of both abundance and stock structure;
- (2) providing information relevant to *Implementation Reviews* of whales in terms of both abundance and stock structure;
- (3) providing baseline information on distribution and abundance for a poorly known area for several large whale species/populations, including those that were known to have been depleted in the past but whose status is unclear;
- (4) providing biopsy samples and photo-identification photos to contribute to discussions of stock structure for several large whale species/populations, including those that were known to have been depleted in the past but whose status is unclear;

¹ The most appropriate way to try to estimate the abundance of sperm whales is using a towed acoustic array. Matsuoka, Donovan and Brownell will investigate the logistics/practicalities of this for 2010.

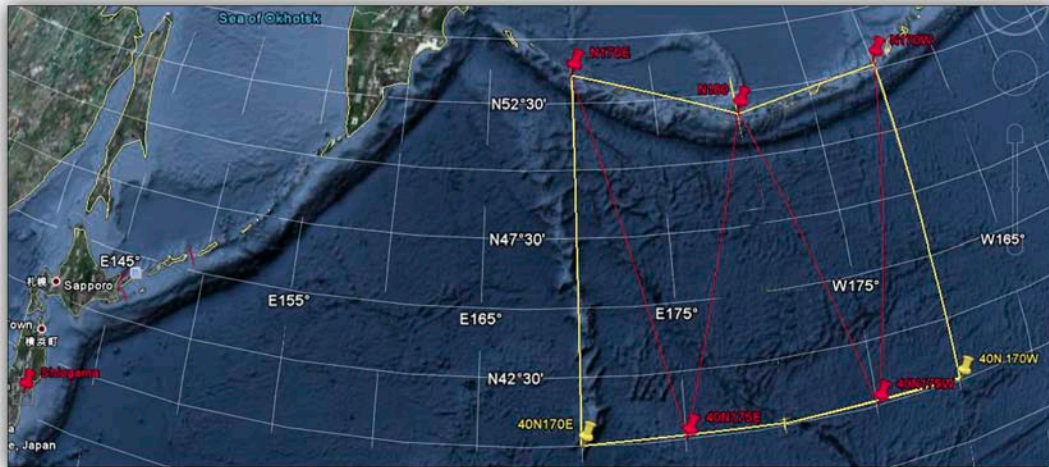


Fig. 1. Map showing research area and proposed cruise track. This will require a total of 60 days including some 15 days transit.

(5) providing essential information for the intersessional workshop to plan for a medium-long term international programme in the North Pacific (see Item 13).

11.3 Survey area and itinerary

A total cruise of about 60 days (i.e. including transit time) represents the maximum operation period of the vessel without refuelling/resupplying. Given this, the meeting **agreed** that in order to adequately cover the longitudinal range 170°E to 170°W, it would be necessary to restrict the latitudinal range. Based on past JSV data and catch data, it was **agreed** that a southern boundary at 40°N and a northern boundary at the Aleutian islands chain would incorporate the expected latitudinal range of sei whales at that time of the year and allow sufficient coverage.

The cruise will take place in July and August and will involve about 15 days transit to and from the research area and thus some 45 days of research. Based on experience elsewhere in the North Pacific, allowing for poor conditions and time for photo-identification and biopsy sampling work should enable for an average of about 67 n.miles per day to be covered in primary searching effort. A proposed cruise track is given as Fig.1.

11.4 Research vessel

The actual vessel to be used has not yet been determined but it may be a vessel that has been used in the SOWER programme; it will certainly have suitable characteristics to be able to undertake the plans outlined in this report and it will have space for four researchers. Searching will occur at the most comfortable cruising speed normally between 10.5 and 11.5 knots.

11.5 Details of the cruise

11.5.1 Survey modes and length of research days

Whilst recognising that the blows of common minke whales are less visible in the North Pacific, the meeting **agreed** that the vessel should alternate BT Option-II mode and SS-II mode (as in SOWER, no more than 100 n.miles shall be surveyed continuously in BT mode).

For survey in BT Option-II the duties of the TOP and IOP observers will be essentially the same as for normal IO mode. Therefore, with respect to the amount of time for continuous survey in this mode, normal IO mode guidelines will apply.

Research hours during the cruise will be the same as on recent SOWER cruises. As in the SOWER programme, for biopsy sampling/photo-identification work on priority species (North Pacific right, blue, sei, humpback², common minke, fin) there may be occasions when it is beneficial to extend research outside the normal research hours. The basis for such special extension of research hours should again involve mutual agreement between the Captain and Cruise Leader and an allocation of equivalent time-off the following morning or evening.

The research day in transits will begin 30 minutes after sunrise and end 30 minutes before sunset, with a maximum of a 12-hour research day. Time-zone changes will be in 30-minute intervals, coming into effect at midnight.

² Brownell will liaise with the organisers of the SPLASH programme to ascertain whether priority should be given to humpback whales

11.5.2 Number of crew on effort

Two crewmembers will be in the barrel whenever full searching effort is conducted.

One crewmember will be at the helm on the Upper Bridge, regardless of the research mode. Also present on the Upper Bridge, whenever the sighting survey is conducted, will normally be the captain and chief engineer (or an alternate).

There will be four researchers on the vessel. During survey, the number of researchers searching from the Upper Bridge should be standardised at three.

During the BT option-II mode, there should be two observers in the IOP, one crew observer and one researcher.

11.5.3 Acceptable conditions

The usual guidelines for acceptable conditions should apply, i.e. visibility (to see a minke whale) is greater than 1.5 n.miles and wind speed is <25 knots; the sea state should be <Beaufort 6.

11.5.4 Estimated angle and distance training and experiment

The meeting **agreed** that it was valuable to conduct the 'traditional' estimated distance and angle training and experiment undertaken during SOWER cruises. The experiment is designed to calibrate and identify any biases in individual observers' estimation of angle and distance. The experiment should be conducted during weather and sea conditions representative of the conditions encountered during the survey.

The detailed protocol can be found in the Guide for Researchers.

11.5.5 Data format

The survey will be conducted using the same data forms as on the SOWER cruise. Donovan and Matsuoka will ensure that standardised species codes are developed for all species that may be found in the area, basing their work on the existing codes for SOWER cruises

11.5.6 Biopsy sampling/photo-id/videotaping studies

As appropriate and decided by the Cruise Leader, research time will be given for biopsy sampling and/or photo-identification of North Pacific right, blue, sei, humpback³, common minke and fin whales – Bryde's whales are unlikely to be seen north of 40°N). As noted above, the estimated daily number of miles to be steamed in searching mode has a built in allowance for such work.

Videotaping of blue whales will occur in accordance with the protocol given in the Guide for Researchers, which also provide further information on biopsy sampling and photo-identification protocols.

Photographs will become the sole property of the IWC and are available under the standard IWC Guidelines.

11.5.7 Acoustic studies

This will depend on whether it is practical to use a towed array for sperm whales and whether it is possible to obtain suitable sonobuoys for blue whales.

11.5.8 Oceanographic studies

No specific oceanographic studies are planned for 2010.

11.5.9 Use of SCANS equipment

The meeting **agreed** that as last year, 'SCANS' equipment should be used (logistics permitting) to assist in measuring angles and distances and investigating search patterns.

11.6 International researchers

As noted above, Brownell **agreed** to identify an appropriate US scientist to participate in the 2010 survey at no cost.

11.7 Identification of home port organiser

It will be the responsibility of the Japanese scientists to organise matters in the home port.

11.8 Necessary permits

The proposed cruise track includes waters under US jurisdiction. The meeting **agreed** that every effort should be made to obtain permission for the vessel to operate fully in US waters, including photo-identification and biopsy sampling. Obtaining a permit will be the responsibility of Japan; Brownell **agreed** to assist in the process as possible. It was also noted that should biopsy samples be obtained within US waters, a special CITES permit would need to be obtained; samples obtained outside US waters would need an 'introduction from the sea' CITES permit. CITES permits will also be required to ship the IWC half of the biopsy samples to the SWFSC in La Jolla, as is the case for the SOWER samples.

11.9 Data holders and transportation of equipment

The meeting **agreed** that the rules for data availability, shipping and storage should be as for the present SOWER cruise. It also noted that existing IWC equipment used in the 2009/10 SOWER cruise could be used on the North Pacific cruise if required. Copies of data, photographs etc. should be sent to the IWC Secretariat upon completion of the cruise.

³ Brownell will liaise with the organisers of the SPLASH programme to ascertain whether priority should be given to humpback whales

11.10 Meetings

Arrangements for the holding of pre- and post cruise meetings with crew and researchers will be the responsibility of the Japanese scientists.

11.11 Reports

The cruise will follow the requirements for reports and documentation developed for cruises that could provide information for use under the RMP (reference). This will be the responsibility of the Japanese scientists.

12. REVIEW OF THE BUDGET

The plans given under Item 11 assume the same level of Japanese funding being available as for the 2009/2010 SOWER cruise. There are no direct funds available for 2010 within the present IWC budget; the IWC contribution is largely reflected in the contribution of Donovan, Bannister and Brownell to the planning process and loans of equipment where relevant. Brownell will investigate funding for the US researcher. Funding is thus primarily an internal matter for the Government of Japan.

13. PROPOSAL FOR AN INTERSESSIONAL WORKSHOP ON A MID- TO LONG-TERM PROGRAMME

The meeting **agreed** on the importance of holding a well-organised intersessional workshop to plan for a mid- to long-term programme within the North Pacific. It agreed that a proposal for such a workshop should be developed for presentation at IWC62. The agenda and process developed for the ACCOBAMS Workshop (see Item 6) for the Mediterranean would provide a useful starting point. A working group was established to work

intersessionally on a draft outline proposal for submission to the Morocco meeting, with the following membership: Donovan (convenor), An, Brownell, Kitakado, Matsuoka, Miyashita, Pastene.

14. OTHER MATTERS

Ohsumi asked that his view be recorded that while he applauds the new North Pacific initiative, he believes very strongly that given the importance to the IWC of the Southern Ocean, continued monitoring of whale stocks there is vital. Other members agreed with that view, pointing out that while the SORP initiative has the potential to contribute to that objective, the extent to which that will be possible under that partnership has yet to be demonstrated. There is a continuing need to obtain information on large whale abundance and distribution. Brownell noted that the US Government had been asked to provide \$US1million for work in the Southern Ocean from October 2011.

15. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Donovan thanked all those who had taken part in the meeting, in particular the Chair, Kato, and the interpreters, who had performed their difficult task with their customary efficiency and cheerfulness. Kato thanked everyone for their cooperation and hard work, which had resulted in the meeting finishing on the 28th, leaving time for Donovan and Bannister to complete the report on the 29th.

The meeting concluded at approximately 1745 hrs on 27 September 2009.

Annex A

List of Participants

Yong Rock An	Republic of Korea
John Bannister	Western Australian Museum, Australia
Robert Brownell	Southwest Fisheries Science Center, U.S.A.
Greg Donovan	Head of Science, IWC, United Kingdom
Hidehiro Kato	Tokyo University of Marine Science and Technology
Toshihide Kitakado	Tokyo University of Marine Science and Technology
Toshinori Uoya	Fisheries Agency of Japan, MAFF
Tomio Miyashita	National Research Institute of Far Seas Fisheries
Hirohisa Shigemune	Kyodo Senpaku Co., Ltd.
Yoshihiro Fujise	The Institute of Cetacean Research
Seiji Ohsumi	The Institute of Cetacean Research
Shigetoshi Nishiwaki	The Institute of Cetacean Research
Luis Pastene	The Institute of Cetacean Research
Koji Matsuoka	The Institute of Cetacean Research
Hiroto Murase	The Institute of Cetacean Research
Saeko Kumagai	The Institute of Cetacean Research
Yoko Yamakage	Interpreter
Hiroko Yasokawa	Interpreter

Annex B

Agenda

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Annex C

List of documents

NP/09/WP

1.	Extract from 61st IWC/SC report
2.	Review of the past and ongoing survey activities and available data (NOAA, NRIFS, ICR)
3.	Encounter rate of large whales in NP (By Miyashita)
4.	Brief review of the Scientific Committee's issue in the North Pacific (by Matsuoka and Pastene)
5.	An idea of middle-long term research plan for the North Pacific cetacean sighting survey under international cooperations (SC61/WP1)
6.	Report of the workshop on obtaining baseline cetacean abundance information for the ACCOBAMS area (Donovan et al.)
7.	Report of the IWC workshop on future SOWER cruises, 1-4 October 2004, Tokyo
8.	Review of the sighting survey for common minke whales conducted in Korean waters (subarea 5 and 6) from 2000 to 2009
9.	Proposed area and plan for 2010 survey (by Matsuoka)