

**SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL COMMENTS**  
(arising from ScC-SC6)**VESSEL STRIKES**

UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.27.2.3

*(ScC-SC6 Agenda item 27.2.3)***RECOMMENDATIONS TO COP14**

Sc-SC6 recommended to adopt the draft Resolution and the Decisions.

**GENERAL COMMENTS ON THE DOCUMENT**

- The need to consider the different roles of CMS Parties and the IMO in establishing Areas To Be Avoided (ATBAs) was expressed. Parties cannot designate ABTAs outside of territorial waters. This would be the role of the IMO.
- An example was provided of the role that ACCOBAMS played in the establishment of a Particular Sensitive Sea Area (PSSA) in the Northwestern Mediterranean Sea, in which a proposal was developed and agreed under ACCOBAMS and then carried forward to the IMO by four countries. Hence, it was felt that it would be appropriate if the Scientific Council made similar recommendations.
- It was noted that the boundaries of this PSSA were largely based on identified IMMAs and that the Resolution should mention IMMAs and ISRAs as important tools to highlight high risk areas where overlap of species and shipping is high.

**COMMENTS ON SPECIFIC SECTIONS/ INCLUDING POSSIBLE PROPOSALS FOR TEXT REVISION****Page 3, paragraph 7:**

- Amend as follows:  
The International Maritime Organization (IMO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations responsible for promoting safe, secure and environmentally sound shipping. While the main focus of IMO is on maritime safety and security, it also has a role to play in the protection of the marine environment and the conservation of vulnerable marine species. It provides guidance to ensure that shipping activities are conducted in a sustainable and responsible manner, while minimizing the impact on the marine environment. [IMO developed a specific guidance document for minimizing the risk of ship strikes with cetaceans in 2009 \(MEPC.1/Circ.674\).](#)

**Page 3, paragraph 11:**

- Amend as follows:  
IMO is also the entity responsible for approving any changes to shipping lanes [implemented through Traffic Separation Schemes.](#)

**Page 7, Draft Resolution, preamble:**

- Add additional paragraphs:

Welcoming ACCOBAMS Resolutions 7.12 and 8.18 addressing SHIP STRIKES and measures to be taken to reduce the risk of collisions with endangered whales within the Agreement Area: Welcoming the recent establishment of a Particular Sensitive Sea Area (PSSA) in the Northwestern Mediterranean Sea, during the MEPC80 Meeting of the IMO, which, for the first time, established a PSSA with the objectives to reduce the risk of collisions with endangered whale species. The borders of the newly declared PSSA include an area defined as an IMMA during the 2016 Regional workshop.

Recalling that the most effective measures are those that separate whales from vessels (or at least minimize co-occurrence) in space and time, where such measures are possible (using, inter alia, routing schemes), and where routing to keep whales and vessels apart is not possible, the only demonstrated measure to reduce fatal collisions with most large whales is to reduce speed.

**Page 7, Draft Resolution, preambular paragraph 6:**

- Amend as follows:

*Acknowledging* the ongoing work undertaken by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) to minimize collision risk between vessels and marine wildlife, through measures outlined in the IMO guidance (MEPC.1/Circ.674), including Particularly Sensitive Sea Areas (PSSAs) and Ships' routing measures such as Traffic Separation Schemes and Areas To Be Avoided (ATBAs),

**Page 7, Draft Resolution, operative paragraph 2:**

- Amend as follows:

*Encourages* Parties to ~~designate-propose that~~ core aggregation zones and known migration corridors of vulnerable marine megafauna, for example as identified through Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs) and Important Shark and Ray Areas (ISRAs), where there is a significant risk of vessel strikes be avoided through appropriate routing measures implemented through IMO (TSS or ATBA) as Areas To Be Avoided (ATBAs) as a protective measure or to take other effective area-based measures;

**Page 8, Draft Resolution, operative paragraph 9:**

- Amend as follows:

*Invites* Parties to work with IMO to employ their management tools (e.g. TSS, ATBAs or PSSAs) to reduce vessel strikes on marine megafauna;

**Page 9, Draft Annex to the Resolution**

Paragraph 2:

- Amend as follows:

**Designate Whale Shark core zones as Areas To Be Avoided (ATBAs) or consider Traffic Separation Schemes to avoid core habitat zones under IMO**

Given the relatively small size of the core habitat zones (median ~116 km<sup>2</sup>), and the limited impact on shipping time from small changes to shipping routes lanes, this approach would be the most cost-effective and would have a high conservation impact. ~~Moreover, ATBAs would benefit other species of interest that are also at risk from vessel strikes such as marine turtles and marine mammals.~~ Whale Shark ATBAs should be incorporated into wider Marine Protected Area (MPA) designations, supporting the current global effort to protect 30 per cent of the ocean by 2030.

**Page 11 Draft Decisions:**

Directed to the Scientific Council 14.BB b)

- Amend as follows:  
Identify areas where CMS-listed cetaceans are at high risk from vessel strikes, including by mapping shipping lanes against Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs), develop ~~a report~~ advice on appropriate placement of re-routing measures, including area avoidance and/or the establishment of vessel speed restrictions for key cetacean habitats, and make recommendations to Parties;
- The IMMA Secretariat analyzed such “overlap areas” for marine mammals. A report is available at: <https://www.marinemammalhabitat.org/mmpatf/activities/geospatial-analysis-of-threats/> This could be a useful resource for the implementation of the Decision