

REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP ON AQUATIC MAMMALS

William F. Perrin, Chair

Expansion of the Working Group

A problem in the past has been the small number of councilors participating in the activities of the Working Group (at times only one or two). The initiative to expand the Working Group to include experts presently not in the Scientific Council (ScC) began and continues. Of 85 experts on the aquatic mammals and related topics invited by the Chair of the ScC to join the Working Group, 34 have accepted thus far. In addition, regional experts from the UK, Australia and South Africa and representatives of Wild Migration and WDC have joined the Group. Members of the Group have access to the Group's web workspace and receive updates on CMS activities relating to aquatic mammals and copies of listing proposals for comment. This initiative hopefully will broaden the input into ScC advice offered to the CoP.

Listing proposals

Two listing proposals have been submitted. Listing of the polar bear *Ursus maritimus* on Appendix I and Appendix II has been proposed by the Migratory Wildlife Network, with the greatest perceived threat being the loss of sea ice due to global warming. One prediction is that the populations will be reduced by 2/3 by mid-century.

The second submitted proposal is to include the Mediterranean subpopulation of Cuvier's beaked whale (*Ziphius cavirostris*) on Appendix I. The primary perceived threat is acoustic pollution by intense mid-frequency sonar and underwater charges.

Comments on the two proposals have not yet been received from Parties. The proposals have been posted on the WG workspace for comment. Drafts of several other listing proposals are under development: *Delphinapterus leucas*, *Monodon monoceros*, *Orcinus orca* in the northeastern Atlantic and the transient form of the species in the northwestern Pacific, and *Lagenorhynchus albirostris*.

Workshop on cetacean culture

Res.10.15 requested that a workshop be convened "*to review and provide advice on the impact of the emergent science of cetacean social complexity and culture, as it relates to regional populations and to inform forward decisions about CMS conservation priorities.*" Preparations are underway by a steering committee for the workshop, to be held in April of next year in London. The workshop is titled "Joint WDC-CMS Workshop on Cetacean Social Complexity and Culture" and will be chaired by Giuseppe Notarbartolo di Sciarra.

Marine debris

While not being directed by the Working Group, the three reviews required under Res.10.4 on marine debris are relevant to aquatic mammals and are underway.