

Council

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Statement by NAMMCO



**NORTH ATLANTIC MARINE MAMMAL COMMISSION
OPENING STATEMENT TO THE
23rd MEETING OF NASCO**

NAMMCO - the North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission – is pleased to attend as observer the 23rd Annual Meeting of the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization (NASCO).

NAMMCO held its 15th meeting 14 -16 March 2006 in Selfoss, Iceland. Among issues discussed and decisions taken at the fifteenth meeting were the following:

Ecosystem-based management - During 2005, NAMMCO held a special Working Group meeting on Enhancing Ecosystem Based Management. The meeting was held in collaboration with ICES (International Council for the Exploration of the Sea) at their Annual Scientific Conference. NAMMCO is firmly committed to considering the role of marine mammals in the marine ecosystem and developing multi-species approaches to management. NAMMCO will now take forward the recommendations of this Working Group and plans to identify elements in a framework for an ecosystem approach in management.

TNASS – international survey for large whales in the North Atlantic - NAMMCO has a long history of coordinating large-scale surveys for whales in the North Atlantic (NASS), and in 2007, the largest ever NASS survey is planned involving cooperation with all member countries, as well as Canada and the Russian Federation. The survey will have trans-Atlantic coverage from the European to the North American coast for the first time.

Narwhal and beluga - NAMMCO has previously expressed grave concern on the apparent decline of stocks of narwhal and belugas in West Greenland, and while commending Greenland for the recent introduction of quotas and the reduction in the harvest, there is still serious concern that present takes of narwhals and belugas in West Greenland, according to the advice of both the NAMMCO Scientific Committee and the JCNB (Canada Greenland Joint Commission on Narwhal and Beluga) Scientific Working Group are not sustainable and will lead to further depletion of the stocks.

Walrus in West Greenland - NAMMCO expressed concern about the situation for West Greenlandic walrus where a preliminary assessment indicates that current removals may not be sustainable.

Fin whales - In order to complete a requested assessment of fin whale stocks in the North Atlantic, questions related to stock identity and historical catch data in particular still need to be resolved. The NAMMCO Scientific Committee will be taking steps to complete this work as soon as possible.

Establishment of a management committee for seal stocks - Under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, States are obliged to cooperate on the management of all marine mammals. As an international body for cooperation on the conservation and management of marine mammals in the North Atlantic, NAMMCO's work in coordinating research, conservation and management measures for seal stocks is filling an important gap in international cooperation. An important development in this field is the establishment of a Management Committee for seal stocks in NAMMCO, which will address issues relating to management of seal stocks across the North Atlantic.

New publication on user knowledge – Following an important conference in Reykjavik in January 2003 where hunters, scientists and managers joined to exchange information, NAMMCO has just

published the proceedings in a volume entitled, "User Knowledge and Scientific Knowledge in Management Decision-Making" which will form a reference base for future management deliberations. The publication is available from the NAMMCO Secretariat.

Focus on hunting methods - NAMMCO provides a unique forum for the exchange of information and experiences in hunting methods used in marine mammal hunts across the North Atlantic. The NAMMCO Committee on Hunting Methods has developed guidelines on the testing of rifle ammunition for the efficiency in hunting and euthanasia in different small whale species, based on a comprehensive testing carried out on carcasses under controlled conditions.

In addition, the NAMMCO Committee on Hunting Methods plans a special workshop on the issue of "struck and lost" in November 2006 in Copenhagen, Denmark to which hunters and experts will be invited.

International observation of whaling and sealing - NAMMCO has a fully operational international scheme for the observation of whaling and sealing activities in member countries. Experience has shown that there are valuable experiences gained from having NAMMCO observers active in the field, both land-based and onboard vessels, observing a range of different hunts. The main focus of the NAMMCO observation activities in 2006 will be Greenlandic and Norwegian whaling.

Re-election of NAMMCO Council Chair and vice-Chair - Both the Chair – Kate Sanderson (Faroes) and vice-Chair - Halvard P.Johansen (Norway) were re-elected for a further 2-year term.

The next annual meeting of NAMMCO will be held in Norway in the spring of 2007.

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