

24th ASCOBANS Advisory Committee Meeting
Vilnius, Lithuania 25-27 September 2018



INTERNATIONAL
WHALING COMMISSION

IWC Strandings Initiative

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International Whaling Commission

IWC's Strandings Initiative



HISTORICAL CONTEXT

- At IWC66 (2016) the Commission endorsed recommendations on strandings developed at **Scientific Committee** (SC66a and SC66b) and the **Whale Killing Methods and Welfare Issues** Working Group
- Considered recommendations from two **IWC workshops** on strandings response
 - (1) Large Mortality Events, Mass Strandings and International Stranding Response Workshop (San Francisco, December 2015): Response and investigations of cetacean strandings of **unusual/large scale mortality events**
 - (2) Develop Practical Guidance for the Handling of Cetacean Stranding Events (Kruger National Park, May 2016): Building global capacity for effective cetacean stranding response, in particular highlighting relevant actions in the Commission's **Welfare Action Plan**

Strandings Initiative (SI)

- Initially endorsed IWC66 (Bled, Slovenia, 2016)
- Structure:
 - ❑ Standing Working Group on strandings (governance)
 - ❑ Strandings Coordinator
 - ❑ Strandings Expert Panel (biologists, veterinarians, cetacean ecologists)
- 2 year workplan - endorsed IWC67 (Florianopolis, Brazil, 2018)
- The Commission endorsed the Scientific Committee recommendations for the Strandings Initiative including the proposal to extend the Strandings Coordinator role (subject to available funds)*

ToR

(1) Identify and, as appropriate, develop

(a) *advice documents for Principles and Guidelines on **stranding response**, including how to respond effectively;*

(b) *advice documents for Principles and Guidelines on sampling, including how to conduct **scientific investigations** to meet the **needs of the Committee**; and*

(c) *advice on how to **communicate** stranding science and **management decisions***

(2) Assist member states (and regional or national networks) to build strandings response capacity, in general and specifically, through:

*(d) the development of **curricula for training** (live and dead strandings response and scientific investigation) and a plan for the delivery of training events;*

*(e) a strategy for handling **requests received by the Secretariat**, including assistance in coordination of emergency response;*

*(f) a strategy for the development of information through a variety of avenues including consideration of a **centralised data repository** and the reporting of unusual cetacean events; and*

*(g) opportunities for **communication and collaboration***



Strandings Coordinator

Main focus:

- Lead **strategic development** of Strandings Initiative in collaboration with the Steering Group
- Develop **capacity building / training programmes** in emergency response
- Coordinate Expert Panel to develop strategy for handling requests received by the secretariat for training and emergency response
- Identify and pursue **fundraising opportunities** to support the initiative
- Coordinate with **other organizations** who share similar responsibilities and goals relating to strandings

Initial Progress 2018

- **Stranding coordinator** (0.5FTE) - commenced April 2018
- **Expert Panel (EP)** established (gaps identified for African continent)
- Development of **2 year workplan** 2018-2020
- Exploring & developing **collaborations** with IGOs/NGOs/experts
- Response to initial **request for assistance** (late March/April 2018)
 - Mass stranding of common dolphins, Golfo Nuevo, Peninsula Valdes, Argentina
 - Both *funding* (£5,000) and *deployment of regional expertise* was requested and approved in support post-mortem analyses relating to this incident

Main activities planned 2018-2020

- **Perform 1-3 in-country trainings at the request of member countries**
 - Building capacity in strandings response and investigations
 - **Respond to 1-3 cetacean events as requested**
 - Developing investigations, focusing on welfare issues, logistics and diagnostics
 - **Endorse/develop standardized protocols/procedures for emergency response including identification of best practices**
 - Identify ongoing projects that are willing to affiliate & share experience
 - **Raise awareness through communication activities**
 - **Fundraise** to support training and ER requests
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