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)*
(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** (0.5 FTE) - 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