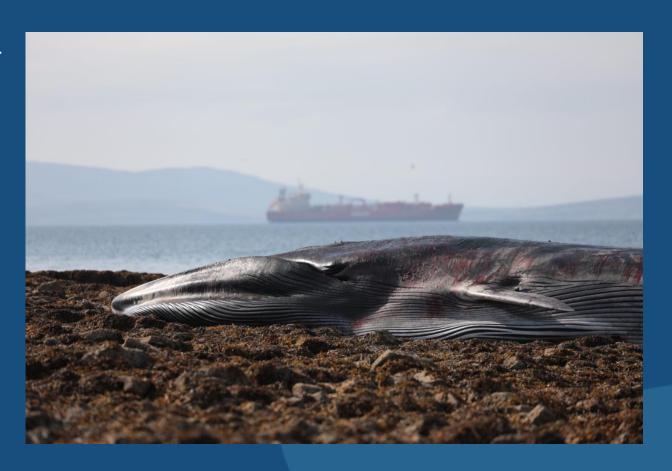INTERNATIONAL
WHALING COMMISSION

Strandings Initiative

Strandings Database Update

International Whaling Commission

- The IWC is the intergovernmental forum for the conservation of whales.

- Not policy makers

- Access to many cetacean experts

- 88 member countries

- Strandings Initiative

Introduction

- Several Scientific Committee recommendations target strandings data advancement and are focus on scoping the development of global database.

- The IWC Strandings Initiative Work Plan highlights the value of strandings data and provides clear activities for work towards increasing data management, curation and visualisation.

- An increased understanding of the pressures on cetaceans and making more informed choices about management, monitoring and response.

- Identify areas to target for training and capacity building, and subsequently provide metrics for assessing the impact knowledge exchange activities have had on reporting and response rates.

- Save valuable research time by already having data collated, standardised, and documented for use.

Where we are now…

- Ongoing scoping of a global strandings database with various regional data holders

- IWC Database Manager and the Chair of SEP met regularly with ASCOBANS and ICES in the summer of 2023 to develop a proposal.

- The databases subgroup of the SEP met in March 2024 to finalise a proposal for a global strandings database and add the development tasks into the new 2025-2028 workplan.

Databases Subgroup

- Recommendation for a global cetacean strandings database to enable better and more responsive monitoring of emerging threats across species and regions.

- Subgroup will support the development of a global database through identifying data providers, implementing quality control measures, guiding the database schema, and providing input on data access and use requirements.

- Key issues and future plans include the potential establishment of a strandings database, considering whether it should be housed by the IWC or an external organization like ICES with a consensus for a collaborative approach.

- Complementing existing networks and collaboration is key!

Work Area 4: Databases								
4.1 Liaise with international organisations, government liaisons and experts to identify existing regional, national and international databases on cetacean strandings Collaborate with international organisations/bodies holding existing cetacean mortality information; evaluate their utility to assist the IWC SI (particularly for metrics of assessing health and existing and emerging threats) and identify key gaps and opportunities to fill knowledge gaps.				IWC Secretariat	Data Manager Scientific Committee SEP Database subgroup	High	Included in data mgmt role	
4.2 Identify main barriers to submission of strandings data to a global cetacean strandings database Circulate a questionnaire to strandings networks and contracting/non-contracting governments to establish regional needs, any issues or barriers to submitting data etc.				IWC Secretariat	Data Manager Scientific Committee	High	Included in data mgmt role / strandings coordinator costs	

#	Action					Lead	Partners	Priority	Resourcing	Cost	Funding source
4.3	**Identify the drivers for a combined 'global' database over existing national databases and establish who are the potential users of such a resource and for what purpose/goal.** This would need liaison both internally within IWC (e.g. national reporting requests) and to external organisations/member countries.	🟧				IWC Secretariat	Data Manager SEP Database Group Scientific Committee	High	Included in data mgmt role / strandings coordinator costs		
4.4	**Develop methods to streamline IWC cetacean stranding and mortality data reporting, validation and curation** Investigate the best way to record mass strandings and unusual mortality events. Establish regional champions to forge links with networks.	🟥	🟥			IWC Secretariat	Data Manager SEP Conservation Committee Ad Hoc Group on Databases SEP Database subgroup	Core	Included in data mgmt role / strandings coordinator costs		
4.5	**Develop data analysis and visualisation methods** Liaise with data users to develop data dashboarding and analysis of high level data, consider use of online mapping services to produce spatial visualisation of reports from member countries.	🟧	🟧	🟧	🟧	IWC Secretariat	Data Manager Ad Hoc Group on Databases SEP Database subgroup SEP Conservation Committee	High			
4.6	**Work with the IWC data manager to develop global cetacean strandings database** Work with ASCOBANS and ICES to initially develop a regional strandings database with a view to progressing this to a global database following a comprehensive review of needs.	🟥	🟥			IWC Secretariat	Data Manager SEP Database subgroup	Core		£35,000	Various: External funding, collaborating governments

4.8 **Work with the IWC data manager to identify opportunities for crossover support between other working groups within IWC** Provide support to relevant IWC workstreams where required to support/interpret relevant evidence derived from strandings and pathology, for example assessing impact of marine debris, HIM and shipstrike			Marine Debris working group Shipstrike group		
4.9 **Investigate the need for recording evidence of marine debris in strandings and ensure that this aspiration is included in any discussions regarding a global strandings databases.** Any updated strandings investigation protocol should include the recording of ingested of entangled marine plastics or the absence of them and strandings networks will be encouraged to record this information. Going forward, this data could be included in a separate portion of the Stranding Database.		IWC Secretariat	Data Manager SEP Database Group Marine Debris Working group	Core	

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