

AWI Comments on Iceland's Commercial Whaling and Trade in Whale Products



Although there is no specific IWC/65 agenda item related to Iceland's commercial whaling, there are a number of agenda items where contracting governments can raise concerns regarding Iceland's commercial whaling program:

Agenda Item 12: Whale Killing Methods and Associated Welfare Issues

Iceland reports no welfare data to the IWC and does not actively participate in its Whale Killing Methods and Associated Welfare Issues working group. In February 2014, Iceland's Minister of Fisheries, in response to a question posed in the Icelandic parliament, acknowledged that Iceland had not collected any data on Time To Death (TTD) for either its fin or minke whale hunts since the hunts first resumed (2003 for minke whales and 2006 for fin whales),¹ although such data was planned to be collected in 2014.

RECOMMENDATION: Call on Iceland to provide data to the IWC on both TTD and Instantaneous Death Rate (IDR) for past, present, and future fin and minke whale hunts and to disclose details related to any modifications and developments of Hvalgranat 99.²

In the same Parliamentary answer noted above, the Minister of Fisheries acknowledged that under the whaling license issued to Hvalur hf, it was not obligated to register in the logbook the number of harpoon grenades used for hunting fin whales. Conversely, minke whalers have been required since 2009 to report on the number of harpoon grenades that they have used.

RECOMMENDATION: Question this discrepancy during both the working group and plenary discussion and call on Iceland to address this oversight and to regulate the use of harpoon grenades in the fin whale hunt.

Agenda Item 13: Revised Management Procedure

As of September 8, 2014 Iceland's Fisheries Directorate reported that a total of 23 minke whales and 116 fin whales had been killed in the 2014 whaling season. It is known that both hunts are ongoing and that, therefore, the death toll will likely increase. These hunts are conducted based on a self-allocated quota from Iceland's Ministry of Fisheries. In December 2013, the Ministry issued a five-year block quota for 154 fin whales per year, plus a carryover of 20 percent. In March 2014, the Ministry issued a six-year block quota for minke whales "based on advice from the Marine Research Institute" plus a potential carryover of up to 20 percent of any unused quota from the previous year.³

To date, Revised Management Procedure (RMP) variants for the North Atlantic fin whales have been tested in Implementation Simulation Trials only for the 0.72 tuning level. The results of these tests found variant 6 (catch limit 46) to perform acceptably and variant 2 (catch limit 87) to be conditionally acceptable, but only subject to the implementation of an approved research program.

The IWC Scientific Committee has been unable to discuss research proposals in the context of variant 2, especially given the need for further discussions on stock structure. Therefore the current management advice, if the Scientific Committee were asked to calculate catch quotas, would be 46 fin whales.

RECOMMENDATION: Call the Commission's attention to the fact that Iceland's current self-allocated fin whale quota is more than three times higher than the sustainable limit that the Scientific Committee would calculate and to encourage all contracting governments to communicate their concern to the Icelandic government regarding its excessive take of fin whales.

¹ <http://www.althingi.is/altext/143/s/0582.html>

² The Hvalgranat 99 is the penthrith grenade manufactured in Norway which is used in several whale hunts around the world, including in Iceland.

³ 263/2014 REGLUGERÐ um breytingu á reglugerð nr. 163, 30. maí 1973, um hvalveiðar, með síðari breytingum.

Agenda Item 17: Infractions

Schedule Paragraph 27.b calls on governments to notify the Commission as to the “aggregate amounts of oil of each grade and quantities of meal, fertiliser (guano), and other products derived from them....”. Further, the Commission has adopted numerous resolutions calling on member governments to report to the Commission on the availability, source and extent of trade in whale products (Resolutions 1994-7, 1995-7, 1996-3, 1997-2, 1998-8 and 2007-4).

Iceland has not complied with either Schedule paragraph 27.b or with the information requested in the various resolutions identified above in any of the years since it resumed commercial whaling.

RECOMMENDATION: Raise Iceland’s lack of reporting during the meeting of the Infractions Sub-committee on September 11, and under Agenda item 17 during the plenary sessions.

Minke whalers in Iceland had been reporting on the quantity of each whale meat offload in all seasons from 2003 until 2013. However, Iceland’s Fisheries Directorate noted that this is not the case for the current 2013 whaling season, and that certain minke whaling vessels have not been weighing catches despite instructions to do so by the Directorate.

RECOMMENDATION: Raise Iceland’s lack of reporting of offloads (which is relevant to compliance with Schedule Paragraph 27.b.)

From 2009 to 2013, according to information from the Fisheries Directorate of Iceland a total of 23 minke whaling trips were observed (of which five were by NAMMCO observers) while 12 fin whaling trips carried observers on board (six trips were observed by NAMMCO).

RECOMMENDATION: As the Infractions Sub-committee includes the topic “Surveillance of Whaling Operations”, we encourage contracting governments to raise concerns at the low level of observation coverage on board Icelandic whaling vessels, especially on vessels engaged in the hunting of fin whales.

Agenda Item 20: Cooperation with other Organizations

Iceland’s international trade in whale products has increased dramatically in the past three years, with exports of thousands of metric tons of whale meat to Japan and Norway under their respective reservations to the Appendix I listing by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), as well as to Latvia and the Faroe Islands.

At the 2013 meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES, the United Nations Environment Programme’s World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC) drew attention to Iceland’s large exports of whale products and noted that trade under reservation can result in “sizeable levels of trade and may undermine the effectiveness of Appendix I listings.”⁴

RECOMMENDATION: Express concern at Iceland’s increased trade in whale products under its reservation to the CITES Appendix I listing of fin and minke whales. In particular, draw attention to the massive trade in whale products between Iceland and Japan which, since Iceland resumed commercial whaling, has totaled more than 5,000 metric tons of endangered fin whale products.

Note the concern about trade under reservation expressed by UNEP-WCMC.

Draw attention to IWC Resolution 1997-2 which encouraged all Contracting Parties to supply information on stockpiles of whale products, as well as the collection of DNA data, and note that CITES also calls on governments to supply information on stockpiles of whale products under Res.Conf.11.4 (Rev. CoP12).

Draw attention to Resolution 2007-4 (Resolution on CITES) and to note the call in that Resolution for all those countries engaged in international trade in whale products to remove their reservations to the listing of great whale species on Appendix 1 of CITES.

ADDITIONAL POINTS

We are aware that a démarche on Iceland’s whaling and trade in whale products is currently being negotiated.

RECOMMENDATION: If a démarche has been agreed prior to IWC65, note the démarche in opening statements, work collaboratively to produce an information note and/or motion, in conjunction with all contracting governments who signed the démarche, that

⁴ <http://www.cites.org/eng/cop/16/inf/E-CoP16i-34.pdf>

includes the full text of the diplomatic note, so that it is included in the official record of IWC65.