

RANGE-WIDE ISSUES

Proposal for a Western Gray Whale Range-Wide Workshop

Submitted by IUCN

BACKGROUND

1. IUCN Resolution 3.077, adopted at the 2004 World Congress in Bangkok, calls upon the Director General of IUCN to promote the protection of western gray whales throughout their range. Further, it urges all range state governments to immediately develop and implement their own national action plans for the conservation of western gray whales and their habitat.
2. The Independent Scientific Review Panel (ISRP), convened by the IUCN in 2004, identified numerous potential threats to western gray whales throughout their range. The ISRP called for *a comprehensive, international strategy (including science) ... for saving this whale population*. Subsequent to this, the 2005 Vancouver Lenders' Workshop also raised the issue of the need for a long-term, comprehensive, international strategy for the recovery and conservation of the western gray whale population. It noted that such a strategy should address oil and gas operations, but also other factors that threaten the long-term persistence of the population.
3. The International Whaling Commission (IWC) has also expressed serious concern about the status of the western gray whale population, and has urged states to make every effort to minimize accidental deaths of these animals and to minimize disturbance to the population and its habitat (Resolution 2001-3 & Resolution 2005-3).
4. The terms of reference for the WGWAP define IUCN's overall objective with respect to this project as *the conservation of the western gray whale population*. While the engagement of Sakhalin Energy is a valuable contribution to the conservation of this population, oil and gas activities are not the only issues on the Sakhalin shelf, and clearly there are serious threats to this population's survival within the broader limits of its range. In light of the recent deaths caused by entrapment in fishing gear, being the only documented deaths due to anthropogenic activity in this population for several years, IUCN regards the potential to widen the current conservation initiative as a matter of priority.

PROPOSAL

5. It is proposed that IUCN convene and host a scientific and technical workshop (Range-wide Workshop), to bring together international experts including scientists from each of the possible range states (Russian Federation, Japan, Republic of Korea, People's Republic of China and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea).
6. The Range-wide Workshop would be convened under the auspices of the IUCN (Global Marine and Species Programmes jointly). A final decision to proceed with the workshop, which remains subject to a funding decision, will be made by 31 December 2007. However, given the relatively short time frame for organising and convening such a workshop, it has been agreed that planning for the workshop should start immediately. Accordingly, a Steering Group to coordinate the workshop has been established and planning for the meeting has commenced.

Scientific and Technical Questions to be Addressed by the Workshop

7. The final terms of reference and draft agenda for the workshop will be developed by the Steering Group. In general terms, the workshop will focus on the following key areas relating to the protection of western gray whales:
 - The extent of the population's geographic range (historical and current), including identification of migratory routes and temporal distribution
 - Identification of actual and likely potential threats to the population throughout its range
 - Identification and characterisation of management measures to mitigate identified threats
 - Engagement of range states and their respective roles
 - Scientific/research needs to better understand and conserve the population

Data requirements and analyses

8. To be defined by Steering Group.

LOGISTICS

Suggested Steering Group

Andrew Hurd - Convenor (IUCN - Global Marine Programme)

Jean-Christophe Vié (IUCN - Species Programme)

Randall Reeves (Chair of the Species Survival Commission Cetacean Specialist Group)

Bob Brownell (WGWAP)

Greg Donovan (International Whaling Commission)

Hidehiro Kato - Range State (Japan) representative

Tadasu Yamada – representative of host institution

Suggested Title for Workshop

Western Pacific Gray Whales: Status and threats throughout the population's range.

Format of Workshop

9. The format of the workshop will be by invitation only, with speakers and topics for discussion being determined by the Steering Group. A limited number of places will be made available for non-participatory observers to attend the meeting. The meeting duration is planned to be 3-4 days.

Date and proposed venue

10. It is proposed that the workshop will take place either immediately prior to or immediately following the Autumn 2008 meeting of the GWAP in Tokyo, Japan (dates to be decided).

TIMETABLE FOR WORKSHOP PLANNING

Milestone	Completion date
Finalise & convene Steering Group	1 November 2007
Define workshop terms of reference	1 January 2008
Agree workshop agenda	1 March 2008
Agree and invite participants	1 March 2008
Invite requested papers	31 March 2008
Venue booking	31 July 2008
Workshop (3-4 days)	Ca. 15 November 2008
Completion of workshop report	31 January 2009