



**United Nations
Environment
Programme**



Distr. LIMITED

UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.36/INF.6

19 November 2014

Original: ENGLISH

Sixteenth Intergovernmental Meeting on the Action Plan for the Caribbean Environment Programme and Thirteenth Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region

Cartagena, Colombia, 11-13 December 2014

UPDATE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTIVITIES IN SUPPORT OF THE ACTION PLAN FOR THE CONSERVATION OF MARINE MAMMALS (MMAP), INCLUDING THE GOVERNMENT OF SPAIN-UNEP LIFEWEB PROJECT “*PROTECTING HABITATS AND MIGRATION CORRIDORS FOR MARINE MAMMALS IN THE SOUTH AND NORTHEAST PACIFIC AND THE WIDER CARIBBEAN THROUGH MARINE PROTECTED AREA NETWORK*”

Introduction

1. In October 2008, the SPAW COP5 adopted the Action Plan for the Conservation of Marine Mammals (MMAP) in the Wider Caribbean Region (UNEP, 2008). Further to the implementation of a first set of priority actions during 2008-2012 as established by previous COPs, the Seventh Meeting of the Contracting Parties Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife in the Wider Caribbean Region (SPAW COP7) adopted new priorities to be implemented during 2013-2014 dependent on the availability of funding.
2. The aim of this report is to present an account of the activities developed in response to these priorities and to propose new priorities for the period 2015-2016, which have been included in the draft SPAW Workplan and Budget for 2015-2016 (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.36/6).
3. The Sixth SPAW STAC (STAC6) and the Eighth SPAW COP (COP8) are invited to review this report prepared by the Secretariat and the SPAW-RAC. The SPAW COP8 is invited to consider the recommendations outlined in Section 7 of this Report, those from STAC6 and to decide on the approval of priorities for implementation during the 2015-2016 biennium.

Summary of Activities Implemented

4. The priority actions identified by the SPAW Parties for implementation during the period 2013-2014 included:
 - Improve awareness of, collect data on, and mitigate the effects of, ship strikes and entanglements on whale and dolphin species in the Wider Caribbean Region;
 - Follow-up to the LifeWeb project: support on-going efforts towards the development of additional protected marine mammal transboundary corridors and provide support for the development of transboundary marine mammal monitoring campaigns;
 - Follow-up to Stranding Workshop, in particular reinforce local stranding network capacities;
 - Support sustainable marine mammal watching in the Wider Caribbean Region and priorities identified at the Regional Workshop on Marine Mammal Watching in the Wider Caribbean Region, 19-22 October 2011;
 - Convene, in collaboration with the AMEP subprogramme, a trilingual workshop on contaminants and pollutants which can adversely affect marine mammal health;
 - Implementation of the Regional Management Plan for the West Indian Manatee; and
 - Develop a formal Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) between UNEP Caribbean Regional Coordinating Unit (CAR/RCU) and the International Whaling Commission (IWC) to foster more formal collaboration in particular with the Scientific and Conservation Committees of the IWC.
5. **Improve awareness of, collect data on, and mitigate the effects of, ship strikes and entanglements on whale and dolphin species in the Wider Caribbean Region**

Status: Completed

- A joint IWC/UNEP-SPAW Training Workshop to Address Lethal Human Impacts on Marine Mammals of the (Spanish-speaking) Wider Caribbean was held in La Paz, Mexico, 27-29 November 2012. Training followed the overall strategy and curricula developed by the IWC expert advisory panel for this topic.
- A three-day training workshop (St. Martin, 12-14 November 2013) for French and English speaking Caribbean was convened jointly by IWC/UNEP-SPAW and hosted by the SPAW Regional Activity Centre. It was supported by a number of governmental and non-governmental agencies. Attendees included members of the regional marine parks and experts nominated by their country's IWC Commissioner and SPAW Government Focal Points.
- A joint IWC/ UNEP-SPAW Workshop to Address Collisions between Marine Mammals and Ships with a focus on the Wider Caribbean, was held in Gamboa, Panama, 18-20 June 2014. The objectives of the meeting were to: 1) review current, relevant ship strike mitigation measures with experts from around the world, 2) identify data gaps and information needs in the region, 3) discuss management initiatives which are most likely to be effective in the region, and beyond, and 4) recommend concrete actions for the IWC,

UNEP-SPAW and member countries. The report of the meeting is available at: http://www.car-spaw-rac.org/IMG/pdf/Ship_Strikes_Report_FINAL-July25.pdf

- The Secretariat continues to strengthen collaboration with the IWC and plans to conclude a Memorandum of Cooperation to further joint activities and interests in the upcoming biennium.

6. Follow-up to the LifeWeb Project: support on-going efforts towards the development of additional protected marine mammal transboundary corridors and provide support for the development of transboundary marine mammal monitoring campaigns

Status: Completed

This major project was implemented between 2010 and 2014. The LifeWeb Project “*Broad-scale Marine Spatial Planning of Marine Mammal Corridors and Protected Areas in the Wider Caribbean and Southeast and Northeast Pacific*”, funded by the Government of Spain, contributed to efforts on the establishment of comprehensive, effectively managed, and ecologically representative regional systems of marine protected areas by 2012 for the conservation of marine mammals in countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, through the application of an Ecosystem Based Management (EBM) approach and marine spatial planning. The project, which began in October 2010 was completed in May 2014 as a joint collaboration between the UNEP Regional Offices for North America (RONA) and for Latin America and the Caribbean (ROLAC), UNEP-CEP, SPAW-RAC, the Permanent Commission for the South Pacific (CPPS), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the French Marine Protected Areas Agency, UNEP Grid-Arendal, the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society (WDCS), FUNDEMAR (Dominican Republic), Fundación MarViva (Costa Rica), other relevant government institutions, NGOs, and additional partners.

The project’s outcomes are:

- Increased knowledge, understanding and mapping of marine mammal distribution, corridors and movements in the Wider Caribbean and South-East Pacific, along with overview of key socio-economic activities (e.g. fisheries, maritime traffic, non-point source pollutants).
- Strengthened capacities of managers at governmental levels and other stakeholders on marine spatial planning to address challenges related to transboundary management of marine mammals as well as conservation of critical habitats.
- Scenarios constructed for marine mammal transboundary management in the Lesser Antilles based on marine spatial planning processes, including the adoption of a Management Plan for the Marine Mammal Sanctuary of the Dominican Republic.
- Experiences and lessons learned disseminated at various levels and scale-up opportunities identified.
- Workshop in Suriname with representatives of Northern Latin America countries and territories to agree on a joint action plan for transboundary management of marine mammals for the south-eastern Caribbean from the North of Brazil to Colombia (i.e. Marine Mammal Conservation Corridor in South-East America - MaMaCocoSea Initiative)

The Final Report on the LifeWeb Project contains detailed information on all project activities, outcomes and products, and can be found at <http://www.car-spaw-rac.org/?Scenarios-de-gestion>. Additional details and maps can be found at <http://www.car-spaw-rac.org/?-Maps-and-reports>.

7. Follow-up to Stranding Workshops

Status: On going

SPAW-RAC, in collaboration with ECCN (Eastern Caribbean Cetaceans Network) and NOAA, purchased and assembled stranding kits distributed to a selected number of stranding networks (in 2013) based on an analysis of their current status and needs. The kits contain field equipment to respond to live and dead and are complemented by a field guide developed by ECCN with financial support of the SPAW-RAC: "A Stranding Guide to the Marine Mammals of the Wider Caribbean Region - An Introductory Field Guide for Stranding Responders" which is available at : <http://www.car-spaw-rac.org/?A-stranding-guide-to-the-marine>
The creation of a regional repository on stranding data has been postponed due to a lack of funding.

8. **Support sustainable marine mammal watching in the Wider Caribbean Region and priorities identified at the Regional Workshop on Marine Mammal Watching in the Wider Caribbean Region, 19-22 October 2011**

Status: On going

The “Overarching Principles and Best Practice Guidelines for Marine Mammal Watching in the Wider Caribbean Region”, adopted by SPAW COP7 in Punta Cana, require wide dissemination in the region, especially amongst whale-watching operators and relevant authorities. To that end, SPAW-RAC is currently elaborating a leaflet highlighting the main points of the guidelines which will be distributed in early 2015.

9. **Implementation of the Regional Management Plan for the West Indian Manatee**

Status: On going

In support of the exchange of information and capacity-building through peer training on the rehabilitation of injured or orphaned manatees, their handling in captivity and the release of the animals into the wild, a Workshop on manatee rescue, rehabilitation, recovery and release was convened by SPAW-RAC on September 30- October 2, 2013 in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Scientists, marine park managers and veterinarians from 9 Caribbean countries and territories took part in this technical workshop. Protocols and procedures were drafted to be further adapted to each country’s needs and capacities regarding monitoring, assessment of health and capture, captivity and release into the wild. The revised management plan is available in English and Spanish. (<http://www.cep.unep.org/publications-and-resources/technical-reports/technical-reports>).

The SPAW-RAC, in collaboration with Florida International University, conducted a study to assess the threats to West Indian manatees from by-catch and vessel strikes in five countries (Belize, Colombia, Mexico, the Dominican Republic and Haiti). It was found that fishermen still catch accidentally or intentionally manatees and that caught manatees are not always released, by-catch therefore being an important source of impact on manatees, while situation differ among the countries targeted in the study.

10. **Convene, in collaboration with the AMEP subprogramme, a trilingual workshop on contaminants and pollutants which can adversely affect marine mammal health**

Status: pending

This activity was postponed due to the lack of funding.

Proposals for new priorities for MMAP Implementation under the 2015-2016 SPAW Workplan

11. In keeping with the priorities previously identified at SPAW COP7 and the progress made to date with activities implemented since the adoption of the MMAP in 2008, the following is being proposed for implementation dependent on the availability of funding:

- a) *Follow up on Marine Mammal Conservation Corridor South East America (MaMaCocoSea) initiatives*
 - Identification of potential funding (French Agency for Marine Protected Area MoU); and
 - Reinforce local stranding network capacities, mainly through technical assistance, including equipment, training and contact lists.
- b) *Follow up to Stranding Workshops*
 - Create a regional data base on strandings
- c) *Support sustainable marine mammal watching in the Wider Caribbean Region and priorities identified at the Regional Workshop on Marine Mammal Watching in the Wider Caribbean Region, 19-22 October 2011.*

- Promote the national and regional implementation of the Overarching Principles and Best Practice Guidelines for Marine Mammal Watching in the Wider Caribbean Region; and
 - Develop a regional database and clearing house for marine mammal watching data.
- d) *Improve awareness of, collect data on, contaminants and pollutants which can adversely affect marine mammal health*
- Organize, in collaboration with UNEP-CEP, SPAW-RAC and the Agoa sanctuary, biopsy campaigns, to identify contaminant (pesticides, polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB), Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAH)) levels in marine mammals of Wider Caribbean region.
- e) *Support sistering between the different marine mammal sanctuaries in the Wider Caribbean region*
- f) *Implementation of the Regional Management Plan for the West Indian Manatee*
- Reinforce knowledge of the distribution, numbers and status of manatee populations in the different countries in which it is present, particularly in areas where this knowledge is incomplete; and
 - Support exchange of information and capacity-building through peer-training on rehabilitation of injured or orphaned manatees, subsequent handling in captivity, and release of animals into the wild.