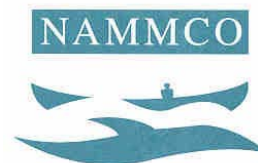


6 March, 2003



FINAL PRESS RELEASE

Twelfth Meeting of the NAMMCO Council

The North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission (NAMMCO) held its 12th meeting 4 - 6 March 2003 in Asker, Norway. The meeting was attended by delegations from the member countries, the Faroe Islands, Greenland, Iceland and Norway, as well as observers from the Governments of Canada, Denmark, Japan and the Russian Federation. A number of inter-governmental and non-governmental organisations also attended the meeting.

- **Enhancing Ecosystem-based Management**

NAMMCO has been at the forefront of efforts to implement ecosystem-based, multispecies approaches to the management of living marine resources. The new Working Group on Enhancing Ecosystem-based Management will look at recent developments in this area and how these can be related to the work of NAMMCO. Non-member North Atlantic countries, in particular Canada and the Russian Federation, will be invited to participate in the Working Group.

- **North Atlantic Sightings Surveys (NASS)**

New abundance estimates for a number of North Atlantic whale stocks will soon be completed based on the results of the most recent North Atlantic Sightings Survey conducted in 2001. The North Atlantic Sightings Surveys are a series of large-scale whale sightings surveys that began in 1987. The surveys conducted in 1995 and 2001 were co-ordinated by the NAMMCO Scientific Committee. These international surveys have covered much of the Northeast and North Central Atlantic, and provide a unique source of information on the distribution, abundance and trends in abundance of several whale stocks, including fin, minke, pilot, humpback, sei, northern bottlenose and blue whales. This information is crucially important in the management of whale stocks throughout the North Atlantic, and also in the assessment of their role in the marine ecosystem. NAMMCO will work to continue these surveys in the future, and to broaden their coverage to other areas of the North Atlantic.

- **NAMMCO International Observation Scheme**

NAMMCO is the only international organisation that has a functioning International Inspection and Observation Scheme for whaling and sealing. In 2002 whaling and sealing activities in the Faroes, Greenland and Norway were monitored. In 2003 shipboard observations of Norwegian minke whaling will be emphasised.

- **Seals**

NAMMCO will host a Workshop on Seal Hunting Methods in September 2004, in Tromsø, Norway. The Workshop will include participation from all NAMMCO member countries and other countries worldwide engaged in seal hunting. The Workshop will review existing seal hunting methods and identify ways to further enhance the efficiency of killing methods as well as the safety of hunters.

Next month the Scientific Committee will conduct a population assessment of all major grey seal stocks in the North Atlantic, including stocks in the USA, Canada, Iceland, the Faroes, Norway and the Scotland.

- **User Knowledge in Management Decision Making**

NAMMCO hosted a highly successful international conference on integrating user knowledge and scientific knowledge in management decision making in Iceland in January 2003. Based on the outcome of the conference, NAMMCO is working towards better incorporating user knowledge in the management decision making process.

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