



Auditorium Rainier III, Monaco

PROJECTS OF INTEREST TO THE PELAGOS AGREEMENT AND TO THE PARTICULARLY SENSITIVE SEA AREA (PSSA)

REPORT

EVENT INTRODUCTION

*The Chairman of the Scientific and Technical Committee, Mr **Eric Béraud (Monaco)**, opened the side-event illustrating that the objective of the side event is to provide the Scientific and Technical Committee (STC) an overview of existing tools and ongoing projects that are of interest for the Pelagos Agreement.*

Three projects developing important aspects linked to the issue of maritime traffic and to the recent designation of the North-western Mediterranean PSSA were being presented. The Chairman of the STC underlined how these projects could also inform the organisation of the side-event of the 9th Meeting of the Parties of Pelagos as well as for the implementation of the “Pelagos Slow Travel” theme for which the French Party is the coordinator.

SUMMARIES OF PRESENTATIONS

[The ppt presentations made during the workshop can be downloaded on this following link: [access slides.](#)]

1. Project “Life CONCEPTU MARIS - Training course on collision risk and biodiversity conservation”

*By Mrs **Paola Tepsich**, researcher at the CIMA Foundation, Italy.*

The project « Life CONCEPTU MARIS - CONservation of CEtaceans and Pelagic Sea Turtles in Med - Managing Actions for their Recovery In Sustainability » (2022-2026) is funded by the European Union's LIFE programme and implemented by 11 Italian, French and Spanish

partners, coordinated by ISPRA, (Institute for Environmental Protection and Research, Italy). It uses ferries as platforms of opportunity to collect scientific data on the presence of cetaceans and sea turtles using a variety of techniques, including visual observations, water samples collection to analyse environmental-DNA and stable isotopes. The core project area is the Tyrrhenian Sea, with three replication areas: the Adriatic Sea, the Pelagos Sanctuary and the Cetacean Migration Corridor.

This project includes a training course of is on building adequate knowledge and awareness material for shipping companies' staff on the risks of collision and the importance of conserving biodiversity, in collaboration with the companies supporting the project and an advisory committee. This training targets captains and sailors but may also be used for other staff and passengers. It is organised into different modules on: (1) the Mediterranean marine biodiversity, (2) the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic area (ACCOBAMS), (3) Mediterranean cetacean and sea turtles species, (4) the risk of collision between ships and large cetaceans, and (5) tools for minimising the risk of collision. The course has been developed as an asynchronous e-learning via the edu.cimafoundation.org platform and is available in 4 different languages (Italian, French, English and Spanish). The course is also supported by the presence of specialist observers on board, as well as printed manuals that can be distributed on board and to all interested parties. At the end of the module participants have a final text before receiving their certificate. This course has been built on the IT-FR Marittimo Sicomar plus project experience, which had a similar course specific to the Pelagos Sanctuary.

Mrs Tepsich also pointed out that the training course will be updated to fully include the information on the NW Med PSSA associated protection measures.

In response to a question from Mr Nicolas Entrup (OceanCare) on the assessment of the effectiveness of change in navigation behaviour, Mrs Tepsich replied that in the past 15 years she has been observing a change in captain's attitude and awareness in terms of the collision issue. However, next summer (from May to the end of the season), a questionnaire for crews will be used to assess the awareness levels. In general, crews appear to be more reactive to the presence of whales and they seem to pay more attention. She also points out that captains need help in understanding how fast and in which direction cetaceans travel. This is an area in which their knowledge needs to be improved.

Head of the Italian Delegation, Mrs Caterina Fortuna, thanked Mrs Tepsich for her presentation and highlighted the ambition of this outreach and capacity building programme is, wishing that both Pelagos Permanent Secretariat and Pelagos Parties may evaluate the opportunity to take advantage of the project for the implementation of some of Pelagos Action Plan activities. She also pointed out that products of EU funded projects usually disappear when the project is over and suggested that the Pelagos Agreement could become

a tool to institutionalise some of these training tools and courses, maybe through the cooperation activities included in the action plan, cooperation with universities or organization of other kind.

Mrs **Tepsich** confirmed that exchanges with the Pelagos Secretariat are ongoing on the possibility of sharing the videos for the identification of species and she confirms all LIFE products will be shared.

2. Project “A ship strike mitigation tool for the Pelagos Sanctuary”

*By Mr **Alex Mitchell**, Coordinator Whale Report Alert System at OceanWise, Canada.*

The Whale Report Alert System (WRAS) is a mobile and desktop application created by OceanWise, with fundings by several entities (the Port of Vancouver, Quiet Sound, Transport Canada, Department for Oceans & Fisheries, Prince Rupert Port Authority, LNG Canada, and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation). The application sends alerts to commercial mariners when they are within 10 miles of a whale detection. The aim of this tool is to improve mariners’ situational awareness at sea by informing them of the presence of marine mammals, thereby reducing the risk of collision and disturbance. Sailors can slow down, change course, or increase their vigilance. The tool was born out of demand from sailors to go further than what was offered by occupation maps, and so provide them with data in real time. It fetches data from multiple sources, including hydrophones, partner observation networks and citizen scientists using the Ocean Wise Whale Report mobile application.

Key aspects of the WRAS initiative include: (a) its co-design with mariners that had the possibility to influence its technical setup at various stages of development (e.g., on the type, frequency, duration of alerts) and translates into a sense of ownership (i.e., they are prepared to slow down voluntarily); (b) the essential collaboration with other organisations to promote and adopt this framework (the WRAS), which includes also regular, attractive and up-to-date training modules to inform stakeholders on the best scientific knowledge and latest legislation, which is particularly important for an industry where there is a high turnover; (c) automatised data sharing to make the process as simple as possible.

Mr **Mitchell** pointed out that education and active conservation, combined with slowing down, have proven to be useful tools in reducing the risk of fatal collisions. Among the technical issues to be tackled, he mentioned: unmanned international vessel; problems accessing the application; language and texting to an international number; a poor-quality mobile signal (meaning that alerts cannot be sent reliably in some areas and therefore sightings cannot be transmitted in real time); differing attitudes to data availability and to data entering.

In response to a question by Mr **Entrup** (OceanCare) on whether sightings information is shared with all vessels as an open source or it is selective, Mr **Mitchell** clarifies that the tool is only reserved to commercial Mariners and that the general public do not have access to the data.

Mrs **Caterina Fortuna**, Head of the Italian Delegation, thanked Mr Mitchell for his exhaustive presentation. The WRAS framework and experience is a very valuable resource for the Pelagos Agreement that could capitalize on lesson learned by the Canadian colleagues. Particularly interesting is their experience in all steps of a process that resemble very much to the implementation of adopted associated measures of the new NW Med PSSA. The OceanWise experience can be extremely useful for France, Italy, Monaco and Spain to avoid investing in wrong solutions, saving time, energy and money.

It was also noticed that the huge amount of work done through these projects and all lessons learned are important for the Pelagos Agreement. For example, the ongoing exchanges between Pelagos Secretariat and OceanWise on a potential cooperation in this regard are a promising first step.

3. Project "MSP4BIODIVERSITY"

*By Mr **Andrea Barbanti**, researcher at CNR-ISMAR, Italy.*

The project MSP4BIODIVERSITY is a 3-year project (2023-2025). The project brings together a broad group of activities that contribute to the environment and its preservation. The study area is the Italian maritime area (including part of the Sanctuary). The aim is to create dynamic and interdisciplinary knowledge framework to support national Maritime Spatial Planning processes based on the protection of biodiversity and on an integrated vision of the ecological, economic, and social dimensions. One more important activity is the development, through a specific methodology, of different scenarios testing some "what if" (3 scenarios are being developed for 3 areas) which will then enable tools to be created adapting to these scenarios. The process includes 4 main steps: some preparatory actions, scenario building, scenario analysis and evaluation and finally, transferability of results and methods. He showed how a scenario building has been conceived.

Conclusion

The Chairman of the CST, Mr **Eric Béraud**, closed the side event by thanking the participants for their attendance and their presentations.