REPORT ON THE USE OF NETCCOBAMS

Issue: NETCCOBAMS

1. Action requested

The Scientific Committee is invited to:

a. **consider** the Report on the use of NETCCOBAMS,
b. **provide recommendations** to the Parties on this issue**.**

2. Background

During the 15th Meeting of the Scientific Committee (Tunis, Tunisia, 10th & 11th May 2023), members recommended to activate the NETCCOBAMS Working Group established by Resolution 8.7 as soon as possible.

This Working Group was coordinated by Dimitar Popov and supported by Lorenza Babbini, Rimel Ben Messaoud, Léa David, Greg Donovan, Nicolas Entrup, Caterina Fortuna, Draško Holcer, Alessio Maglio, Aurelie Moulins, Arda Tonay.

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Working Group members: Dimitar Popov (coordinator), Lorenza Babbini, Rimel Ben Messaoud, Léa David, Greg Donovan, Nicolas Entrup, Caterina Fortuna, Draško Holcer, Alessio Maglio, Aurelie Moulins, Arda Tonay.

Viola Panigada – Technical support

INTRODUCTION

NETCCOBAMS platform aims at tackling specific management needs and objectives of ACCOBAMS by aggregating data in one place; scientific validation and supporting decision-making based on insightful data. So far there are 120 registered users on the platform, however, not many active users add data/information to the network. Feedback so far has mainly been related to technical issues with registration. There are still six members of the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee who have not registered to the platform and have been kindly invited to do so. There are now 44 projects in the "Activities" section of the platform. Most have explicit descriptors (logo, tags, description), however many still lack data/files in the *Documents* section.

NETCCOBAMS AT THE EUROPEAN CETACEAN SOCIETY

NETCCOBAMS was a subject in two workshops of the European Cetacean Society conference in April 2024:
- Mapping human activities data in the ACCOBAMS area
- Advancing knowledge on fin whales in the Mediterranean Sea.

The Workshop identified the importance of regular contact amongst fin whale experts in the region in addition to more intensive workshops (say every 5 years). Options suggested include establishing a more formal fin whale community, use of an email list, use of NETCCOBAMS. It was suggested that the organizers of the present workshop investigate this and develop a proposal for consideration by the participants.

Proposed next steps:
1. Finalize strategy for communication among fin whale experts in the Mediterranean
2. Facilitate registration of fin whale workshop participants to NETCCOBAMS
3. [Potentially: create an online 'expression of interest' form where users can introduce themselves and briefly describe why they are interested in registering to the platform. After a brief review, if deemed appropriate, the user will receive a link and instructions to register]

NETCCOBAMS AND UNEP-MAP KMAP

During the second coordination meeting of the NW Mediterranean PSSA (Particularly Sensitive Sea Area) collaboration between UNEP-MAP KMaP (https://kmap.info-rac.org/) and ACCOBAMS NETCCOBAMS platform (https://accobams.org/) was presented showing available tools and functionalities. An experiment of cooperation already carried out was shown and concretized in an experiment of mean boat speed display during the 2023 summer over the new PSSA area, by extrapolating AIS data from NETCCOBAMS over 1km square cells grid, and representing them in the KMaP as an animation.

Further collaboration regarding ship strikes and underwater noise is being discussed between ACCOBAMS and the Information and Communication Regional Activity Centre (InfoRAC).

NETCCOBAMS from ACCOBAMS and KMap from UNEP-MAP are fully complimentary and compatible since both the platforms share geographical data, allow for multiple levels of access, with different rights and permissions, and support metadata sharing together with data, acknowledging the importance to document data.

For this reason, a general collaboration plan was signed in the form of a Memorandum of Understanding where the roles are basically summarized as follows:

- ACCOBAMS, to respond to specific needs and management purposes through its NETCCOBAMS platform:
    - Data Production for the PSSA, including through AIS data which are already available and used for different purposes such as ship-noise monitoring
    - Data production for D11/EO11 monitoring and assessment through Acoustic Map module;
    - Data production for D1/EO1 monitoring and assessment through ASI programme

- InfoRAC to capitalize the data and information shared from NETCCOBAMS
    - To harmonise data and information on ship strikes with other topics addressed in the KMaP platform
    - To contribute achieving UNEP/MAP objectives, including IMAP Ecological Objectives
    - To raise awareness on the specific matter

In particular, for the needs of the NW PSSA establishment, NETCCOBAMS offers a tool (Visi Zone) to evidence, in near-real time, the speed of boats navigating over a selected geographical region from AIS data and KMaP offers tools for data dissemination such as animated maps and dashboards. From the PSSA definition document a speed comprised between 10 and 13 Nautical Knots could diminish considerably the risk of ship strikes with cetaceans.

In this frame, a first pilot study and cooperation experiment is introduced where a time series of maps of ships mean speed in the PSSA area are produced from Visi Zone. Subsequently, the dataset is represented in KMaP using an animation map and a dashboard to visually explore traffic loads and characterize speed.

For the future, it would be interesting to improve the current experiment by spatially evidence zones where the limit of 13 kn is more frequently overpassed, or cross these zones with eventual cetacean routes to understand the effective risk of collision.

It would also be interesting to improve technical/scientific cooperation (i) extending the experiment in time to create a proper database of boats' speed weekly aggregated data, (ii) study the evolution over time of mean speed to better characterize boat traffic in the PSSA (e.g. spatial variation from one season to the other, identification of most frequented zones etc.), (iii) better understand how to cross quasi-real time data offered by NETCCOBAMS with cetaceans observation survey data to create meaningful and effective risk maps.