



MINUTES SSC/2017/13
25 July 2017
12:00 am EST - Via Conference Call

Participants:

Dr. Tammy Trott, Commission Acting Chair
Dr. Billy Causey, Commissioner
Prof. Stephen de Mora, Commissioner
Mr. Mark Spalding, Commissioner
Dr. David Freestone, Executive Secretary
(Apologies, Prof. Howard Roe, Prof. Ricardo Santos, Commissioners)

1. Revised Minutes of 18-19 April 2017 Joint Meeting (MOS/SSC/2017/3/Doc.2)

APPROVED.

2. **Executive Secretary** presented an update of Work Programme implementation to-date:

- 2.1 Signatories

- As a result of the recent Bermuda election, the Progressive Labour Party has established a new government. The Minister of Home Affairs, Minister Walton Brown, is now responsible for the Department of Planning and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and will be the point Ministry for the Sargasso Sea Commission). The Permanent Secretary for Home Affairs is Ms. M. Rozy Azhar.

- 2.2 Commission

- The **Executive Secretary will contact the New PS by email and also request assistance of Cabinet Secretary Derrick Binns to advance approval of the Cabinet Paper regarding the appointment of new Commissioners.** Three nominations were received: Senator Wilfred Moore (self-nominated, with Government of Canada support); Dr Tammy Trott (nominated by the Government of Bermuda); and Dr Frederico Cardigos (Nominated by the Government of the Azores). The Bermuda Cabinet approval is expected to be

delayed given the requirements associated with establishment of a new government.

- The **Executive Secretary will renew a request for comments from the Signatory Governments on the Stewardship Agenda.**
- The **Executive Secretary** noted the IUCN letter requiring that he retire by 31 December 2017 pursuant to IUCN's mandatory retirement age requirement. Motion made by **Commissioner de Mora**, seconded by **Commissioner Trott**, and supported also by **Commissioners Spalding and Causey** to send IUCN an official Commission letter indicating their opposition to the application of this mandatory age policy on the Sargasso Sea Commission Secretariat based in the United States, where this policy and process run counter to US anti-discrimination law and negatively impacts the Secretariat's operations.
- While the Secretariat can remain at IUCN until 31 December 2017, the Secretariat is now actively considering alternative hosting and sponsorship options, including The Ocean Foundation.
- The Helmsley Charitable Trust has transferred \$175,000 to The Ocean Foundation in a challenge grant for the Commission -- \$15,000 of which will be used by Commissioner Spalding to assist in Commission fundraising efforts.
- The UN Second World Ocean Assessment is underway and has requested Commission input as it embarks on a revised process and format for the second version. **Commissioners Trott and Roe** and the **Executive Secretary** will likely continue their involvement in the process on behalf of the Commission.

2.3 Collaborating Partners

- The MOU with the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) that specifically applies to the UNEP Cartagena and the UNEP Abidjan Convention Secretariat and has been finalized.
- The **Executive Secretary** notes that the Secretariat will work with the Legal Office of the International Seabed Authority (ISA) to explore the chances of an MOU with the Isa – preferably in 2018.
- The final meeting of the BBNJ Prep Com concluded on 22 July with a consensus recommendation to pursue an international conference on the sustainable use of biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction. The Sargasso Sea Commission partnered with the Duke Marine Geospatial Ecology Lab, MarViva, and the Antarctic and Southern Ocean Coalition on a side event related to management of dynamic pelagic ecosystems.
- A formal letter of invitation to become a Collaborating Partner to the SSC was sent to the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute and to Dr Kate Mansfield, Director of the University of Central Florida Marine Turtle Research Group.

2.4 Fisheries

- Dr Brian Luckhurst attended the ICCAT Ecosystem subcommittee meeting in Madrid in July and presented a paper on the place of squid in the Sargasso Sea food chain that was well received.
- SSC has received an invitation to participate as an official observer at the NAFO annual meeting in September 2017 in Montreal. Participation will be budget dependent.
- The **Executive Secretary** reported on his presentation to the South Atlantic Fisheries Management Council (SAFMC) Habitat Advisory Panel in Charleston, SC (17 May), followed by a presentation to the SAFMC Habitat Committee (13 June). He had requested the Committee to consider reducing the total allowable catch (TAC) of *Sargassum* in its fishery management plan to zero. It was well received and the Committee has formed a subcommittee to investigate the modalities. **Commissioner Causey** noted the significance of the official recognition that *Sargassum* is Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) and the application of the Lacey Act that extends these protections into international waters so that *Sargassum* collected or caught in ABNJ cannot be landed in the US. **The SAFMC is the official US regulatory body responsible for conservation of Sargassum in the Atlantic and the importance of this precedent to other countries and even to ICCAT was noted.**

2.5 Shipping

- The latest election and new government complicates this issue and therefore the **Executive Secretary** plans to visit Bermuda to meet the New Minister to pursue the issue of how to engage with the cruise ship industry in Bermuda.

2.6 Sea Bed

- Building on her experience last year, Dr Philomene Verlaan again will be officially representing the Commission at the International Seabed Authority's 23rd Annual Session (7-18 August 2017).

2.7 Migratory Species

- The SSC worked with Dr Matt Gollock and the Government of Monaco to submit a "Concerted Action" proposal under the CMS relating to *Anguilla Anguilla* for consideration by the CMS Science Body in Bonn in July and then to the CMS COP 12 in Manila, The Philippines 23-28 October 2017. The Secretariat is also coordinating to host a side event at the COP on the CMS action to date related to the European Eel.
- A second CMS European Eel Range State meeting is planned for early spring of 2018, possible venues include Malmo Sweden. There may be interest from within the government of Sweden and possibly private funding available. The SSC has engaged the services of Professor Christopher Wold to draft a paper

on options for a legal instrument under CMS for the European Eel, with a first draft due by September 2017.

2.8 Finance and Fundraising Report

- The Ocean Foundation has received \$175,000 from the **Helmsley Charitable Trust** for the Sargasso Sea Commission to use as a challenge grant to engage new sponsors and funders.
- The **Munson Foundation** has decided to double its current annual grant amount of \$10,000 and renew the grant in 2018.
- The proposal to **NASA** for a series of two workshops in 2017-2018 related to the COVERAGE project is nearly complete.
- The Secretariat has engaged the services of a corporate fundraiser in the UK, **Ms. Liz Parker**, to explore possibilities for corporate sponsorship.
- Adam Johnson, a young Bermudian ocean enthusiast, has completed his campaign **#StandUpForSargasso**, to raise awareness and funds for the Commission by paddling for 11.5 hours around Bermuda. His campaign raised over \$2500 for the Sargasso Sea Project Inc. charity, obtained local newspaper coverage in Bermuda, and caught the attention of the Bermuda Tourism Board, the Starboard Paddle Company in Bermuda and the Mission Blue communications' office.
- The **Executive Secretary** will set up a meeting with the DC representative of the Aspen Institute's High Seas Campaign to explore potential for collaboration.

2.9 Mapping and Monitoring

- The Secretariat is pursuing contacts at the University of Edinburgh to find out whether they may provide the capacity to review the cable survey data from ICPC on behalf of the Commission.

2.10 Communications

- The Secretariat Marine Research Fellow, Tess Mackey, reported that Facebook, LinkedIn and twitter activity is increasing and we now have about 800 email addresses on our electronic newsletter list serve, with a 50% open rate and impressive click through rate for our newsletters.
- **The Executive Secretary** and **Kristina Gjerde** attended the Sea Education Association Annual symposium in Woods Hole (June 16). The SEA created a significant online presence and the Secretariat is working with the students to capture their achievements and improve its own efforts; further opportunities to grow online engagement are being explored.

3 Any Other Business

None.

4 Date of Next Meeting

- The next SSC meeting call was set for **7 September 2017** at noon am EST.