



**MINUTES SSC/2021/36**

**January 21, 2021**

**11:00 AM EDT - Via Zoom Conference Call**

**Participants:**

**Dr Tammy Warren, Commission Acting Chair**

**Mr Frederico Cardigos, Commissioner**

**Prof Stephen de Mora, Commissioner**

**Sen Wilfred Moore, Commissioner**

**Mrs Rochelle Newbold, Commissioner**

**Prof Howard Roe, Commissioner**

**Mr Mark Spalding, Commissioner**

**Dr David Freestone, Executive Secretary**

**Ms Teresa Mackey, SSC Secretariat**

1. Minutes of 18 November 2020 Meeting (SSC/2020/35)
  - Approved.
  
2. **Executive Secretary** presented an update of Work Programme implementation to-date:
  - 1.1. Signatories
    - The virtual Signatories call scheduled for 13 January was postponed because of lack of availability. It will be moved to early February
    - Commissioner Cardigos noted that The Azores is in the process of appointing a new governmental focal point to replace Filipe Porteiro. He will inform us once there has been formal confirmation from the Government of The Azores. The Commission thanked Filipe for his long service since 2014 and noted that he organised the very successful Joint Meeting in Horta in 2017.
  
  - 1.2. Commission
    - The terms of two Commission members (Commissioners Mark Spalding and Stephen de Mora) will be expiring in 2021. Both are eligible for reappointment this year. The Executive Secretary will open the call for nominations in March/April of this year.

- **Commissioner Moore** asked for clarification about the organizational structure and relationships between the Commission, Signatories, and the SSC Secretariat. The Executive Secretary reviewed the organization chart and the relationships between Sargasso Sea Project, Inc. (SSPI; a 501(c)(3) registered in the state of New York which is the financial mechanism for the Sargasso Sea Commission), and the Bermuda legal entity - the Sargasso Sea Commission a Bermuda registered charity (Charity #966). Grants are made payable to SSPI, then are transferred to the IUCN North America office for execution with a 7.5% overhead fee.
- The chapter for the 2nd UN World Ocean Assessment has been approved by the editors. The Commission thanked **Commissioner Roe** for taking the lead on this and his writing team – including **Commissioner Warren**, Laurie Kell, Brian Luckhurst and the **Executive Secretary** - for all their work.

### 1.3. Secretariat

- Nothing noted.

### 1.4. Collaborating Partners

- The Secretariat has invited the FFEM project partners- MarViva, the Ocean University at Brest, and the AFB (the French biodiversity agency), to become official collaborating partners.

### 1.5. Fisheries

- **The Executive Secretary** has been in contact with the Secretariat of the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO) and has drafted a Secretariat to Secretariat MOU which is currently being considered by the NAFO Parties. No response is expected till mid-2021. Due to COVID-19 concerns, the ICCAT SCRS and Commission meetings initially scheduled for Fall 2020 were canceled. Professor Laurie Kell made a presentation to the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission about the Commission's work using the Sargasso Sea as a case study to develop ecosystem indicators. He also referenced the NASA COVERAGE data portal. The result was a notable increase in interest in the COVERAGE website. Professor Kell and Dr Luckhurst are also in discussions with the US Fish & Wildlife Service to obtain access to tuna tagging data.

### 1.6 Shipping

- The Secretariat has had some follow-up meetings with CEVEN-protect, the winners of the Odyssey Momentum challenge. CEVEN are now proposing to use vessel traffic movements and AIS data to develop machine learning tools to identify vessels and their movements through the Sargasso Sea. Then the

team could build a historical record of ship traffic through the Sargasso Sea, which might potentially assist with a case for protections at IMO.

1.6. Sea Bed

- The Secretariat just received the hard copy of the countersigned MoU with the Secretariat of the International Seabed Authority.

1.7. Migratory Species

- The Secretariat and the Commission would like to express its sadness at the sudden passing of Robert Vagg, Report Writer for the Convention on Migratory Species. He was a talented reporter and wonderful friend of the Commission, having authored a number of the reports of its Eel Workshops over the past several years. Robert will be truly missed, and all agreed to send condolences to his family and to friends and his former colleagues at the CMS.
- The SSC has supported the development of a “zero draft” of the European Eel Single Species Action plan, which was authorised by the CMS COP 13 in India in February 2020. It was circulated to the Range States for comment. The Secretariat has engaged Matt Gollock as a consultant and is working with the CMS Secretariat to plan a series of virtual meetings with regional groups to discuss the zero draft action plan. Both the EU Commission and the Government of Sweden have expressed interest in joining Monaco in supporting this process.

1.8. Finance and Fundraising Report

- The Commission would like to express its thanks to Angel Braestrup and the Curtis & Edith Munson Foundation board for their renewal of a grant of \$25,000 USD. **Commissioner Spalding** recommended that the Commission add a “doing business as” to the SSPI bank account to avoid any issues depositing checks written to the Commission. The Secretariat is following up on the NY state paperwork to file the Sargasso Sea Commission as an “assumed name” of SSPI.
- The Secretariat was approached by a private donor in Bermuda who will be providing \$10,000 funding from his family foundation for the support of Commission activities in Bermuda.
- The contribution agreement with the Department of Fisheries & Oceans Canada was finalized to provide \$165K CAD of operational funding to the Secretariat the current fiscal year ending in March 2021. As part of the DFO contribution agreement, the Secretariat is in discussions with DFO about a virtual American eel Range State workshop (as a follow-up to the one held in the Dominican Republic in 2018). **Commissioner de Mora** noted that his

nephew, Joe de Mora, is working in communications for DFO and might be a useful contact.

- The final project document was approved by the FFEM Steering Committee in December 2020, with contracts to be signed in early 2021 and hopefully work beginning the first quarter of 2021. The FFEM grant agreement will be with SSPI, Inc. (the nonprofit arm of the Secretariat) and, subject to negotiations on overhead, passed to IUCN for implementation as usual.
- The “Common Oceans” Programmatic Proposal for ABNJ was approved by the GEF Secretariat during their GEF Council Meeting from 2-3 June. This included a \$3m allocation to the Sargasso Sea. IOC as the Executing Agency received a \$100k Project Preparation Grant (PPG) from GEF. The IOC has now hired David Vousden as the lead consultant to prepare the final project document to be sent for GEF CEO approval within 12 months from the time of GEF Council approval. There was an inception workshop held in December 2020, which will be followed by a stakeholder consultation process during the preparation of the final project document.

#### 1.9. Mapping and Monitoring

- The COVERAGE Project has now received funding from NASA for its Phase C.

#### 1.10 Communications

- The Secretariat Programme Manager, **Ms Tess Mackey**, encouraged Commissioners to submit photos and blurbs of recent happenings to the newsletter. The next edition of the newsletter will be released in March 2021.
- The Secretariat also jointly submitted an article with MarViva to the latest edition of the Global Ocean Biodiversity Initiative newsletter to introduce the FFEM project.

### 3. Any Other Business

### 4. Date of Next Meeting

- As agreed on the call, the next SSC meeting will be scheduled via Doodle poll and confirmed over email with the Commissioners.