

Sargasso Sea Commission
20 February 2015
Meeting Minutes SSC/2015/1

Participants:

Prof. Howard Roe, Chair
Dr. Tammy Trott, Commissioner
Prof. Ricardo Santos, Commissioner
Prof. Dire Tladi, Commissioner
Dr. David Freestone, Executive Secretary
Kate Killerlain Morrison, Deputy Executive Secretary

Dr. Billy Causey was not present due to a scheduling conflict.

Minutes:

The call began at 10:30 am eastern and ended at 11:33 am eastern.

Prof Roe welcomed Commissioners to the first virtual meeting of the Commission

I. Update on Work Programme Implementation

Dr. David Freestone presented an update of Work Programme implementation to-date:

PRIORITY ONE: INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION OF ECOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE

- While further new language proposed by South Africa and the Bahamas (with the support of the UK, US and Monaco) was not incorporated in the 2014 UN Oceans Resolution, language from previous years was carried over for a third year.
- A new draft Collaboration Arrangement is pending between the OSPAR Commission and the Sargasso Sea Commission, with an attempt to bring more specificity to species and habitats of common concern in both regions.
- The Commission Secretariat continues to accept interest from new Declaration Signatories and expects new governments to sign in 2015.

PRIORITY TWO: FISHERIES AND FISHERIES HABITAT CONSERVATION

- The UK Overseas Territories delegation attended the ICCAT Commission meeting in Nov. 2014 to continue to explore potential interest and support among Parties and to serve as resource regarding any related questions from the ICCAT Ecosystem Subcommittee report. The United Kingdom Overseas Territories put forward a Draft Resolution by ICCAT on the Sargasso Sea”[PLE-

135A]. Given that there is currently an ICCAT Resolution in force in relation to the Sargasso Sea, there was little support for this draft. On the understanding that management advice can be included in the SCRS Report to the Commission contemplated under paragraph 2 of the current Resolution [Res. 12-12], the sponsors agreed to withdraw the proposal.

- In regard to the SCRS report to the ICCAT Commission, in relation to the specific request regarding the ecological importance of the Sargasso Sea to tuna and tuna-like species and ecologically associated species, Dr. Santiago (retiring SCRS Chair) reported that several scientific papers had been presented and reviewed, and the SCRS had prepared a work plan to continue assessing the importance of the Sargasso Sea.

PRIORITY THREE: INTERNATIONAL SHIPPING

- Discussions are continuing between the Bermuda Government on a Memorandum of Understanding with selected cruise lines regarding passage through the Sargasso Sea.

PRIORITY FOUR: SUBMARINE COMMUNICATION CABLES

- A report of the workshop, held on 23 October 2014 in Washington, DC on *Submarine Cables in the Sargasso Sea- Legal and Environmental Issues in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction* has been posted online.

PRIORITY FIVE: CONSERVATION OF MIGRATORY SPECIES

- Monaco, as a Hamilton Declaration Signatory, submitted a proposal to the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) Science Council in July 2014 and subsequently the CoP in November 2014 to list the European eel (*Anguilla anguilla*) on Appendix II of Convention on Migratory Species. The proposal was approved.
- The Commission Secretariat continues to seek resources for a “range State” workshop for *Anguilla anguilla* to discuss possible protection measures- including possibly spatial measures regarding the spawning area.
- A final draft of the “*Concept Note on the importance of Sargassum and the Sargasso Sea for Atlantic Sea Turtles*” is undergoing Spanish translation and formatting. This paper will be co-published as an Inter-American Turtle Convention IAC/SSC publication on both organizations’ websites.

PRIORITY SIX: DEFINING ROLE IN DATA AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

- The Commission Secretariat has posted a new webpage [“Tracking Trends in Sargassum Presence”](#) to serve as an information clearinghouse for information on *Sargassum* and *Sargassum* strandings with links to direct data and specific experts.

II. Finance

Kate Killerlain Morrison presented the 2015 budget which was previously adopted by the Sargasso Sea Project, Inc. and Sargasso Sea Commission Board of Directors on 3 February 2015. With reductions in

costs across the board, it was noted that this was a minimum scenario budget that can be changed over time to respond to additional needs and prospective income increases. Budget details and financials are confidential to the Commission and Signatories.

Dr. David Freestone noted that fund raising proposals are pending with two partners, with an anticipated response in Spring 2015.

Prof. Roe encouraged the Commission to consider prioritizing Work Programme initiatives when considering the budget and noted that difficult decisions may need to be made.

III. Reports for Commission website

Prof. Roe shared an update on two papers to be posted on the Commission website this spring.

Assessing the Economic Contribution of Marine and Coastal Ecosystem Services in the Sargasso Sea (Pendelton et al) is undergoing a second revision in response to comments. The report identifies some economic benefits of the Sargasso Sea, against a background of limited data and analysis from the area.

The status of the *Concept Note on the importance of Sargassum and the Sargasso Sea for Atlantic Sea Turtles*, mentioned above, was described.

Prof. Roe further informed the Commission that Dr. Brian Luckhurst was working on additional analyses of tuna and tuna-like species to support discussions at the ICCAT Ecosystem Subcommittee in June 2015.

IV. Collaborating Partners

Kate Killerlain Morrison reported on acceptances by proposed Collaborating Partners to-date. These include: the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), World Commission on Protected Areas, Duke University Geospatial Marine Ecology Lab, Mission Blue/Sylvia Earle Alliance, Humpback Whale Project, International Seakeepers Society, WWF International, the Marine & Environmental Law Institute, Dalhousie University, Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies (IASS) and the Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relations (IDDRI).

ACTION: Prof. Ricardo Santos suggested additions for consideration from Portugal and Monaco that he will send under separate cover.

V. Collaboration Arrangements- discussion of substantive mutual interest

Dr. David Freestone reported that draft Collaboration Arrangements are also pending with the Abidjan Convention and the OSPAR Commission. As stated above, the OSPAR draft attempts to bring more specificity to species and habitats of common concern in both regions.

An initial approach has been made to the Cartagena Convention Secretariat and we are awaiting a response.

VI. Commission intern projects

The Commission Secretariat has been approached by potential interns to support both scientific, legal and policy research in support of the Commission Work Programme. While encouraged by this interest, the Commission expressed concerns about the feasibility of working with interns given the virtual, remote setting currently hosting SSC operations. Nevertheless the Commission will continue to welcome expressions of interest and will review possibilities.

VII. Commissioner transitions

The 2015 selection process for the Commission will be initiated on 31 March 2015, as per [Appendix I Annex I, Rules of Procedure - Meeting of Signatories of the Hamilton Declaration, Adopted 21 October 2014](#). The Commission vacancy and job description will be made publically available at that time, with nominations due from Signatories by 30 April 2015. Bermuda will appoint the new Commissioner(s) by 1 August 2015.

ACTION: Commission Secretariat to initiate 2015 Commission selection process on 31 March 2015.

VIII. Communications *Modus Operandi* (Attachment D)

A draft Communications *Modus Operandi* was drafted by the Commission Secretariat in response to a request by Minister Atherden, chair of the Joint Meeting of Signatories and the Sargasso Sea Commission in October 2014. The draft is currently under review by the Commission and will be shared with the Signatories after 6 March 2015 for further review.

ACTION: Commissioners to review draft *Modus Operandi* by 6 March.

IX. Global Leadership Academy Sustainable Oceans Lab

Members of the Sargasso Sea Commission team will be participating in the German GIZ Global Leadership Academy's Sustainable Oceans Lab from 2-5 March 2015 in Germany. Participants include: Dr. David Freestone, Dr. Billy Causey, Dr. Tammy Trott, Robert Bendsted-Smith (Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Trust) and Kate Killerlain Morrison. The March workshop is the first of three sessions over the next two years that will bring together teams working on marine conservation efforts across the globe to discuss shared challenges and lessons-learned.

X. Any other business

Partnership on Regional Ocean Governance

In February 2015, the Sargasso Sea Commission was invited to join the Partnership on Regional Ocean Governance, an idea launched at the 2014 Potsdam Ocean Governance Workshop. The Partnership will provide an informal platform that brings together experts from science, civil society and decision-making, including governments, regional organizations and UN-agencies. The aim is to engage in multi-stakeholder processes that reach across current sectoral divides in order (i) to identify and develop innovative approaches in ocean governance, (ii) to build regional capacities and, wherever requested, to assist in strengthening regional ocean governance structures, and (iii) to foster the role of regional ocean governance approaches at the global level, e.g. in the context of the post-2015 development agenda and the UN negotiations of a new global agreement for biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction under UNCLOS. Dr. David Freestone will also serve on the Steering Committee in a personal capacity.

**AGREED: Commission accepts invitation to join
Partnership on Regional Ocean Governance.**

Update on Bermuda charitable status for Sargasso Sea Commission

Dr. David Freestone reported that Sargasso Sea Commission has been established as a corporate entity in Bermuda and that an application had been made to the Bermuda Charity Commissioners for charitable status – which was still under review.

Prof. Howard Roe adjourned the meeting at 11:33 am eastern.
The next call will be 23 April 2015 at 10:30 am US Eastern.