



MINUTES SSC/2021/39

June 23rd, 2021

11:00 AM EDT - Via Zoom Conference Call

Participants:

Dr Tammy Warren, Commission Acting Chair

Prof Stephen de Mora, Commissioner

Sen Wilfred Moore, Commissioner

Mr Mark Spalding, Commissioner

Prof Howard Roe, Commissioner

Mrs. Rochelle Newbold, Commissioner

Dr David Freestone, Executive Secretary

Fae Sapsford, SSC Secretariat

1. The Commissioners had a meeting to discuss the Draft Rules of Procedure developed by the Signatories preceding the 39th Commission meeting. They approved a memo outlining their concerns and asked the Secretariat to send it to the Signatories
2. Minutes of April 21 2021 (SSC/2021/38)
 - Approved.
3. **Executive Secretary** presented an update of Work Programme implementation to-date:
 - 1.1. Report of Signatories call
 - The **Executive Secretary** reported that the Signatories meeting took place on June 3, 2021.
 - The **Executive Secretary** reported that in 2014 and 2015 the Secretariat had been adequately funded, but since then funding had become more difficult. He reported that he has been asked to prepare a presentation for the next Signatories meeting to outline the baseline financial support required to run the Secretariat.
 - 1.2. Commissioner appointment process update
 - The **Executive Secretary** reminded the Commissioners that **Commissioner Spalding** and **Commissioner de Mora's** three-year terms

had expired, but both were eligible for re-appointment, and both had indicated they would like to serve for another term. **Commissioner Spalding** had been nominated by the U.S. and **Commissioner de Mora** by the UK. The Azores had nominated Dr. Ana Calaço, a distinguished deep sea benthic biologist. The three nominations were circulated to the Signatories and Collaborating Partners for comment by July 15th. The Executive Secretary will then send the nomination – with received comments, to the Bermuda government for the final decision.

1.3. Collaborating partners

- The **Executive Secretary** reported that Mission Blue was planning to re-launch the Sargasso Sea Hope Spot, and that **Fae Sapsford** was currently filling in forms for this process. Part of this application is submitting photos under the terms of an agreement signed by SSPI with Mission Blue.
- The **Executive Secretary** reported that the Secretariat has signed an MOU with the University of the Bahamas, and thanked **Commissioner Newbold** for her help with this. SSC also had a follow up meeting with Dr. Watson, the Dean of the Science Faculty, and the Deputy Principal of the University. He also noted that the FFEM grant has a capacity building project to develop an online course for ocean governance in English, Spanish and French, and synergies have been identified with UB in connection with this.

1.4. Fisheries

- The **Executive Secretary** reported that Laurie Kell and Brian Luckhurst attended the virtual meeting of the ICCAT ecosystem sub-committee in May, and presented three papers. The SSC has now presented 19 papers to ICCAT. There is now a wealth of scientific knowledge supporting an ecosystem-based approach to fisheries in the Sargasso Sea.
- The next full ICCAT Commission meeting will take place in November, as Commissioner Warren confirmed. She also agreed to liaise with the UK in relation to accrediting the SSC delegation.

1.5. Shipping

- **Commissioner Spalding** noted that he was the author of one of the chapters in a new publication in Springer Publications (led by WEMU) on shipping sustainability that may have relevance to SSC.

1.6. Seabed

- Nothing noted.

1.7. Migratory species

- The **Executive Secretary** reported that SSC hosted a very successful workshop of the Range States of the American Eel with eel fisheries on

May 18th and 19th, financed by DFO Canada. The purpose of the meeting was to develop a roadmap for possible future collaboration between the American Eel range states. The meeting hosted 25 participants from 5 range states of the American Eel – Canada, the U.S., Jamaica, Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Cuba was unable to join. The meeting highlighted the differences between range states in fishing quotas and licensing for American Eels. It also highlighted the challenges in approaching the conservation of a highly migratory animal with such a wide range from a single-jurisdiction perspective.

- Dr. Matthew Gollock of the Zoological Society of London, had prepped a report of the workshop, which had been circulated to the participants for comments.
- **Commissioner Moore** asked when the final version would be available to Commissioners, as it may be helpful to exploring elver fisheries matters in Canada. The Executive Secretary stated that the final report would be available in early July.
- European eel Single Species Action Plan – no further progress noted.

1.8. Finance and fundraising report

- The **Executive Secretary** reported that the contract for the FFEM grant is progressing, but the FFEM office seems to be very busy, so it is taking longer than expected. He also updated the Commissioners on the financing structure related to the agreement. FFEM is going to contract the three Implementing Partners (BIOS, Duke and Imperial) and The Ocean Foundation separately, and pay them directly. IUCN will be administering the remainder of the \$1.1 million U.S. and has to sign a separate agreement with SSPI.
- The **Executive Secretary** also asked the Commissioners to save the date for August 26th and 27th for the FFEM project launch event, with official invitations to follow.
- The **Executive Secretary** reported that the Secretariat received an unexpected donation of \$20,000 from the Donner Foundation, and he thanked **Commissioner Moore** for his help in establishing this relationship.
- The **Executive Secretary** also reported that the Secretariat had received some \$2,000 from the lawyers acting for the estate of Richard Rockefeller in the final distribution of his estate. This was in addition to \$240,500 received from the Rockefeller family to honour Richard's wishes in his will to support the Commission.
- The **Executive Secretary** reported that Dr David Vousden had finished the first draft of the ProDoc for the GF grant – this is 127 pages, but the last 50 are pro forma annexes. Once it is reviewed by UNDP and IOC it will be distributed to the Commissioners, the Signatories and all the attendees of the GF inception workshop for review. The Signatories had agreed to give

their comments within 4 weeks. The Secretariat is hoping to get endorsement in August or September and move forward immediately. This grant is for \$3 million.

- The **Executive Secretary** also noted his appreciation for IOC's quick processing time and assistance with the administration of the \$100k GEF Project Preparation Grant.

1.9. Mapping and monitoring

- The **Executive Secretary** stated that when the GEF funding comes on line, the Secretariat will have more capacity to move forward on mapping and monitoring projects
- The **Executive Secretary** also stated that the funding for COVERAGE Project phase C, with the Sargasso Sea as one of the two pilot areas, has been approved by NASA – this will mean the project has funding for 3 years.
- After a question from **Commissioner Roe**, the **Executive Secretary** explained that the COVERAGE project will work in parallel with the Global Fishing Watch but that both are liaising with the Duke Marine Geospatial Ecology Lab under Professor Halpin.

1.10. Communications

- The **Executive Secretary** reported that the Secretariat had been increasing its communications presence by regular postings and thanked **Fae Sapsford** for her work. She then gave a communications report, highlighting that Tess Mackey, the outgoing Programme Manager published an article recently in Eco Magazine, who partnered with IOC-UNESCO to create an exclusive digital edition of the 2021 series for the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development. This article highlighted the GEF and FFEM grants
- **Fae Sapsford** also reported that the Secretariat has an upcoming article in the GOBI newsletter on sargassum endemics, an article on Sargasso Sea exploration coming out in association with NOAA's Okeanos Explorer expedition. She also highlighted the new feature in the SSC newsletter, 'Creature Feature'.
- **Fae Sapsford** reported that the Commission had a good engagement rate on Instagram, and that the Commission's presence on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn continued to grow. She reported that SSC Newsletter open rate metrics were high.
- **Fae Sapsford** reported that the website was also being updated, and the **Executive Secretary** noted that the ICCAT page had gone through significant changes highlighting the Commission's engagement, and that JP Rouja had provided the Commission with updated photos for the website gallery.

3. Any Other Business/Date of Next Meeting

- The Commissioners agreed that the next SSC meeting will be held on **August 25th at 11am ET.**