



**MINUTES SSC/2021/40**

**August 25<sup>th</sup>, 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**

**Dr David Freestone, Executive Secretary**

**Fae Sapsford, SSC Secretariat**

**Absent – Mrs Rochelle Newbold, Commissioner**

**1. Minutes of June 23<sup>rd</sup> 2021 (SSC/2021/39)**

- **Approved.**

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

**1.1. Report of Signatories call**

- The **Executive Secretary** gave a report of the Signatories call. The main item discussed was the proposed update to the Rules of Procedure. After the last meeting, **Commissioner Spalding** had sent a memo on behalf of the Commission expressing concerns at the changes in roles which the new Rules of Procedure seemed to imply. The **Executive Secretary** said he was keen to emphasise the need to foster the collegial nature of the Commissioner/Signatory relationship. The **Executive Secretary** had emphasised this also in comments that he himself had sent to the Signatories. He agreed to send those comments to the Commission also. He did note the fact that the Signatories were actively looking at ways in which they might support the Commission and the Secretariat

**1.2. Commissioner appointment process update**

- The **Executive Secretary** reported that the Commissioner nominations were with PS Rozy Azhar in Bermuda for onward passage to the Minister and Cabinet. There was no progress to report yet but the appointment process is well ahead of schedule.

### 1.3. Collaborating partners

- The **Executive Secretary** reported that Mission Blue was planning to re-launch the Sargasso Sea Hope Spot. They recently gained new funding from Rolex for marketing purposes. The SSPI Board had signed an agreement with Mission Blue giving them the right to use any photographs the Secretariat supplied them with without restriction. **Fae Sapsford** gave an update on the process, stating that the details of the Commission's work and objectives had been submitted to Mission Blue. The Secretariat also had to follow up with the photographers who allowed their work to be used.
- The **Executive Secretary** reported that he had kept the Signatories in the loop about new collaborating partners, as that is something they requested more review powers over in the draft Rules of Procedure. The **Executive Secretary** reported that the Bermuda Zoological Society (BZS) would like to become a collaborating partner. He also noted that Commissioners would be sent a link to their website. There was no objection to this proposal.

### 1.4. Fisheries

- The **Executive Secretary** reported that Prof Laurie Kell and Dr Brian Luckhurst attended the virtual meeting of the ICCAT ecosystem sub-committee in May, and presented three papers. Later this year the regular annual ICCAT meetings will go ahead virtually. The **Executive Secretary** also noted that the Secretariat was pursuing an MOU with ICCAT. **Commissioner Warren** explained that the MOU would likely have to go through the annual ICCAT meeting, and the last annual meeting took place virtually and only dealt with absolutely essential business due to COVID.
- The **Executive Secretary** reported that Dr Brian Luckhurst and Prof Laurie Kell had also been working on getting access to fish tagging data from the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). There were some confidentiality issues, but he reported that the data will likely be able to be used. The Secretariat was setting up a meeting between all parties involved in order to discuss how the data will be used.

### 1.5. Shipping

- The **Executive Secretary** reported that in the context of the GEF proposal he has been exploring possible consultants familiar with the work of the IMO to assist with possible future work with IMO.
- **Commissioner Spalding** reported that he wrote a book chapter on sustainable shipping “Greening the Blue Economy: A Transdisciplinary Analysis” published in Sustainability in the Marine Domain: Towards Ocean Governance and Beyond, eds. Carpenter, A., Johansson, T, and Skinner, J. (2021).

1.6. Seabed

- Nothing noted.

1.7. Migratory species

- The **Executive Secretary** reported that the American Eel Range States workshop was very successful – the report was now finalised and published.
- He also reported that the Secretariat was pursuing a meeting with the CMS to talk about the ongoing CMS single-species action plan.

1.8. Mapping and Monitoring

- The **Executive Secretary** reported that NASA’s COVERAGE is in its third phase. The plan is for their portal to “go live” in 18 months. He noted that the plan is to link the COVERAGE portal to that produced by the FFEM/GEF project.
- He also noted that the IUCN World Conservation Congress meeting was taking place September 3-11, 2021. The **Executive Secretary** reported he would be doing a presentation on AI, including COVERAGE, Global Fishing Watch, and Duke Marine Spatial Ecology Lab. There would also be a French Government sponsored event on the FFEM Project

1.9. Finance

- The **Executive Secretary** noted that there was a Munson report due in mid-September. **Commissioner Spalding** reported that the Foundation would likely have a board meeting a few months after that.
- The **Executive Secretary** noted that funding from the Government of the Azores and the Donner Foundation had been received by the Secretariat, and that he was now able to organize for him to be back on the payroll.

FFEM

- The **Executive Secretary** reported that the FFEM agreement was moving forward. It was hoped the signing would take place before the end of August.
- The **Executive Secretary** also noted that drafts of the three other agreements with the implementing partners (BIOS, Duke and Imperial) were also under

review. In addition to IUCN, another agreement would be necessary with The Ocean Foundation (TOF), through whom the Secretariat will pay an employee. He reported that FFEM had now agreed to pay the grant amount directly to SSPI.

- The **Executive Secretary** also reported that the FFEM kick-off event was being held the next day (August 26th). He hoped the agreement would be signed in time for the event. He reported that once the agreement was signed, the Secretariat would be able to start taking steps to make the drawdowns for the first year of funding.

#### GEF

- The **Executive Secretary** reported that the project was moving along well. The ProDoc had been sent for comments and some had been received. **Commissioner De Mora** highlighted the fact that this is an ABNJ project that affects all countries – and wondered if it would be possible to build consultation with countries that are not Hamilton Declaration signatories, or GEF-eligible countries, into the project. The **Executive Secretary** recognized this limitation, and noted that the outcomes reached through the project would be stronger with more countries involved – but more difficult to negotiate.
- The **Executive Secretary** also reported that the project was required to complete a social and environmental safeguards screening to meet UNDP requirements. This process was being coordinated by Dr David Vousden and was moving along.
- The **Executive Secretary** outlined the project timeline – after comments are received at the end of August, Dr David Vousden will make resulting edits. A new version, will be shared at a validation workshop at the beginning of October for final review. Then the document will go to the GEF CEO for endorsement.
- **Commissioner Roe** asked about the appointment of a project manager, and the **Executive Secretary** explained that he had insisted that the project manager be a part time consultant as a full-time project manager on UN rates would take a major percentage of the grant.

#### 1.10 Communications

- **Fae Sapsford** gave a communications update, reporting that there are a number of new pages on the Commission’s website:
  - A page for the American Eel Range States workshop, which includes all the presentations and the final report.
  - An Okeanos Explorer page, including some images from the ROV deep dives the expedition conducted.
  - A ‘Creative Responses to the Sargasso Sea’ page, including some of the art and writing that has been done by Sargasso Sea

supporters about the Sargasso Sea, including work by Jim Toomey and James Prosek.

- New pages for the FFEM and GEF projects, which would include all digital resources for those.

She also added some new images throughout the website.

- **Fae Sapsford** also reported that she has written an article for the GOBI newsletter on sargassum endemics, and an article for the NOAA Okeanos Explorer website.
- **Fae Sapsford** also reported that the Commission's social media presence was growing as she was making more posts – mainly focused on the species found within the Sargasso Sea.
- **Fae Sapsford** also reported she was working on the next newsletter, which would be coordinated with the Mission Blue Hope Spot relaunch.

### 3. Any Other Business/Date of Next Meeting

- The Commissioners agreed that the next SSC meeting will be held on **the 13<sup>th</sup> of October 2021, at 11am EDT.**