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Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW) in the
Wider Caribbean Region

Recommendations to strengthen marine mammal conservation in the Wider Caribbean Region



ACRONYMS

CARI'MAM	Caribbean Marine Mammals Preservation Network
COP	Conference of the parties
CRFM	Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism
CSN	Caribbean Stranding Network
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
GCFI	Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute
IMO	International Maritime Organisation
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
IWC	International Whaling Commission
HAMMAC	Human Activities and Marine Megafauna Across the Caribbean
MMAP	Marine Mammal Action Plan
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPA	Marine Protected Area
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
RAC	Regional Activity Center
RAN	Regional Activity Network
REMPEITC	Regional Marine Pollution Emergency, Information and Training Centre – Caribe
SPAW	Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife Protocol
STAC	Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee of the SPAW protocol
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
WCR	Wider Caribbean Region
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

RECOMMENDATIONS TO STRENGTHEN MARINE MAMMAL CONSERVATION IN THE WIDER CARIBBEAN REGION

As recommended by several focal points during March 1 2021 pre-STAC meeting, the present working document is a proposal regarding the majors recommendations for marine mammals, built from the documents provided by the SPAW RAC and the working group for the STAC 9.

1. CONTEXT AND OBJECTIVES

In response of the workplan SPAW 2019-2020, most of the work conducted by SPAW RAC on marine mammals was performed in the framework of the CARI'MAM project. The CARI'MAM project, for Caribbean Marine Mammals Preservation Network, aims at reinforcing the network of marine protected areas involved in marine mammal conservation in the Wider Caribbean Region (WCR), strengthening managerial skills and developing common regional tools for marine mammals management. The CARI'MAM network is composed of managers, scientists and other partners from around the WCR. In total, nine documents produced in the framework of this project have been submitted to STAC9:

- CARI'MAM: an interim report (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.42/INF.28)
- Implementation of the Action Plan for the Conservation of Marine Mammals (MMAP) in the Wider Caribbean: Technical Analysis and Programmatic Overview (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.42/INF.29)
- Implementation of the Action Plan for the Conservation of Marine Mammals: A Scientific and Technical Analysis (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.42/INF.29 addendum 1)
- Current status of national legislation on Marine mammals in countries and territories of the WCR report (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.42/INF.29 addendum 2)
- Inclusion of marine mammals in the MPA management plans: regional study, tools and recommendations for an improved consideration (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.42/INF.30)
- Recommendations to support sustainable marine mammal watching in the WCR (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.42/INF.31)
- Recommendations for a regional certification for a sustainable commercial marine mammals observation activity in the WCR (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.42/INF.31 Addendum 1)
- Proposal for the implementation of a regulatory instrument for marine mammal touristic activities in the WCR (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.42/INF.31 Addendum 2).

In addition to this work, the SPAW species working group work resulted in the collaborative drafting of the document “Toolkit for implementing marine mammal watching guidelines in the WCR” (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.42/INF.32), and on the review of 2 documents: “Implementation of the Action Plan for the Conservation of Marine Mammals: A Scientific and Technical Analysis” (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.42/INF.29 addendum 1) and the updated list of cetaceans found in the Annex II of SPAW protocol.

Following the request made during pre-STAC 1 (March 1st), the SPAW RAC gathered the major recommendations made in the above reports in the present document. They have been organized according to the higher priority level objectives identified in the programmatic overview of the scientific and technical analysis of the UNEP Marine Mammal Action Plan 2008 (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.42/INF.29):

1. Strengthen regional collaboration
2. Develop national marine mammal and/or species specific actions plans
3. Enhance knowledge and monitoring of marine mammal population in the WCR
4. Assess and mitigate bycatch, entanglement and direct catch
5. Assess and mitigate pollution from contaminants

6. Support the development of a sustainable marine mammal watching in the WCR
7. Assess and mitigate acoustic disturbance and vessel strikes

2. OVERALL POSSIBLE RECOMMENDATIONS

The STAC is invited to consider the recommendations provided bellow to strengthen marine mammal conservation in the Wider Caribbean Region in the framework of the SPAW Protocol¹.

1. In order to strengthen regional coordination

The STAC may wish to consider Recommendations:

To the parties to:

- 1.1. Nominate experts from all the countries to the SPAW species working group.
- 1.2. Create a marine mammal RAN including all interesting parties, the marine mammal sanctuaries of the WCR, SPAW RAC, organizations deemed relevant, with the mandate among others to (i) perpetuate the regional network of MPA, NGOs and Scientific institutions involved in marine mammal study and conservation initiated through the CARI'MAM project and to (ii) pursue the development of networking tools (*e.g. Web Site, Online Hub, Facebook page, whatsapp group, workshops, technical exchanges...*), in collaboration with the leaders of the project, SPAW RAC and Agoa sanctuary.

To the secretariat/SPAW-RAC to:

- 1.3. Invite some marine mammal experts from regional and global organizations working on marine mammals (IWC, IUCN...) and related fields such as fisheries and maritime traffic (FAO, CFRM, GCFL, IMO...).
- 1.4. Strengthen relation between SPAW programs and projects.
- 1.5. Strengthen collaboration with regional and global organizations working on marine mammals (IWC, IUCN...) and related fields such as fisheries and maritime traffic (FAO, CFRM, GCFL, IMO...) on specific technical projects, such as bycatch assessment in the Wider Caribbean Region.
- 1.6. Finalize the MoU under development with the IWC.

2. In order that national marine mammal and/or species specific action plans are being developed

The STAC may wish to consider Recommendations:

To the species working group to:

- 2.1.[°] Develop outreach and facilitating tools to encourage and support parties in the development of action plans (*e.g. guides, workshops, online course...*).

¹Regarding funding:

* indicates actions co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) within the framework of the Interreg Caribbean program, through the CARI'MAM project,

+ indicates actions that should be co-financed by the ERDF within the framework of the Interreg Caribbean program, through the HAMMAC project (if the project are accepted, Annex 1)

° indicates actions for which funding must be found

3. In order to enhance knowledge and monitoring of marine mammal populations in the WCR

The STAC may wish to consider Recommendations:

To the Parties to:

- 3.1. Report all action requiring an exemption

To the secretariat to:

- 3.2. Encourage parties to report all action requiring an exemption

To the exemption working group to:

- 3.3. Work on the exemption documents to facilitate and encourage the reporting

To the SPAW RAC and/or a marine mammal RAN to:

- 3.4.° Pursue actions related to the development of capacity building tools (online courses, field sessions, guides...) dedicated to regional stakeholders/organizations involved in marine mammal research and monitoring, in the continuity of CARI'MAM project.

- 3.5.° Pursue the development of outreach tools on marine mammal studies conducted in the WCR (Web Page, Facebook, large public conferences, educational tools), in the continuity of CARI'MAM project.

- 3.6.*+ Strengthen stranding networks, developing standard tools validated by the members of the network: guides, stranding field sheets, database, training workshop, in the continuity of CARI'MAM project.

To the SPAW RAC to:

- 3.7.° Develop a regional 'Red List' in order to assess the conservation status and knowledge gaps of marine mammal populations in the WCR, in partnership with the IUCN and in collaboration with other regional and global organizations working on marine mammals and related fields such as fisheries and maritime traffic.

4. In order to assess and mitigate bycatch, entanglement and directed takes

The STAC may wish to consider Recommendations:

To the secretariat / SPAW RAC to:

- 4.1.° Develop outreach and facilitating tools to encourage parties to enact the legislation that requires the reporting of marine mammal direct take and bycatch in fisheries operations (guides, workshops, online course...)

- 4.2.+ Work on the assessment of marine megafauna bycatch in the Wider Caribbean Region coastal fisheries, in partnership with local, regional and global fisheries organizations (e.g. FAO, RFMO, CFRM, IWC...)

5. In order to assess and mitigate pollution from contaminants

The STAC may wish to consider Recommendations:

To the SPAW RAC/ the secretariat to:

- 5.1.+ Organize a training workshop dedicated to marine mammal oil spill response, in partnership with Agoa sanctuary, and in collaboration with the LBS protocol and REMPEITC RAC.

- 5.2.+ Identify available samples collected on stranded marine mammals and define a strategy for the analysis of these samples (main issues to be addressed, available laboratories, cost of analysis, type

and quantity of samples required...), in collaboration with stranding networks and regional research institutes.

6. In order to support the development of a sustainable marine mammal watching in the region

The STAC may wish to consider Recommendations:

To the secretariat /SPAW RAC in the framework of CARI'MAM and/or the potential marine mammals RAN to:

6.1.°Develop tools to support the development of a sustainable marine mammal watching in the WCR. These tools, depending on countries wishes, could be: education and outreach tools (fliers, filed leaflet, social media campaigns...), capacity building workshops, networking tools (workshops, field sessions...).

6.2.*°Continue to develop a regional certification scheme to support a sustainable and environmentally friendly marine mammal-watching industry in the long term.

7. In order to assess and mitigate acoustic disturbance and vessel strikes

The STAC may wish to consider Recommendations:

To the secretariat /SPAW RAC to:

7.1.+ Identify potential hotpots for marine mammal collision with vessels and maritime traffic noise pollution in the WCR.

7.2.° Develop regional guidelines for seismic survey operations, in collaboration with regional governmental and non governmental organizations involved in this field.

ANNEX 1: MARINE MEGAFaUNA INTERACTIONS AND HUMAN ACTIVITIES IN THE CARIBBEAN

The second Call for Expression of Interest for the INTERREG CARIBBEAN 2014-2020 programme was published on June 8th. The Agoa Sanctuary and its partners, among which, the SPAW RAC, have submitted a project aimed at: **1) enhancing knowledge on the marine megafauna in the WCR and on the anthropogenic impacts on these group of species; and 2) strengthen collaboration between organizations involved in marine megafauna conservation and organizations involved in activities with potential impact on these groups of species.** The project was pre-selected during the first funder committee in October 2020. A complete folder has been submitted at the beginning of 2021, in view of the final selection committee planed for April 2021.

The project is made of 3 work-packages:

WP1: Megafauna interaction with offshore activities, which is divided into 3 actions led by the SPAW RAC

WP2: Marine megafauna and human relationships from the land, divided into 4 actions led by the Agoa Sanctuary

WP3: Experts networking, divided into one action led by SPAW RAC and one by Agoa

The actions led by the SPAW RAC are detailed below.

WP1: MEGAFaUNA INTERACTIONS WITH OFFSHORE ACTIVITIES

Action 1: Marine mammal interaction with Navigation

Maritime traffic, that has a potential significant impact on marine mammals and marine turtles, is constantly increasing, especially in our region of island States. In order to provide a first assessment of this issue, the overlap between marine mammal distribution and maritime traffic will be assessed through quantitative spatial analyses to:

- identify “hot spots” of potential interaction (collision and acoustic disturbance)
- propose adapted management measures, reconciling economic development and preservation of the marine megafauna, for example: definition of particularly vulnerable sea areas by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) or the use of specific avoidance tools such as REPCET.

This work could be conducted in collaboration with research institutes of the WCR, the IMO and the REMPEITEC RAC.

Action 2: Study on fisheries/marine megafauna interactions (marine mammals, turtles, sharks and rays)

This action will target the coastal artisanal and commercial fisheries in collaboration with RFMOs. Sociological surveys will be conducted among fishermen. These surveys will allow to:

- identify the issues and threats encountered in the broadest sense by the profession, the targeted commercial species, the practices and gear used;
- identify the constraints induced by depredation and by-catch on the activity (material damage, loss of time, etc.);
- improve knowledge of the impacts of bycatch on the large marine fauna in the WCR.

This project could be conducted in collaboration with local, regional and global fisheries organizations (e.g. FAO, RFMO, CFRM, IWC...).

Action 3: Status of stranding networks in the Caribbean and strategy for analyzing samples from strandings and landings (marine mammals, turtles, sharks and rays).

Within the framework of the CARI'MAM project, the stranding networks of the WCR have been identified and the intervention capacities on stranded animals will be reinforced (depending on the sanitary crisis). The HAMMAC project aims to go further by:

- (1) develop tools (trainings, guides, online courses...) and purchase equipment to strengthen local networks;
- (2) conduct an analysis of stranding data sets;
- (3) define a common strategy for the analysis of samples collected on stranded animals (in particular contaminants).

This work will rely on the network of actors dedicated to the protection of marine mammals developed within the framework of the CARI'MAM project, including actors trained and competent in the management of strandings at the scale of the Greater Caribbean Region, and national and international experts, such as the IWC Expert Advisory Panel.

WP3: EXPERTS NETWORKING

Action 2: Territorial Financing

It was noted that despite the important contribution of marine biodiversity to the local economy, the budgets dedicated to its protection remain low. Although national, regional or European funds can be mobilized in French territories, other territories are less well provided for.

The objective of this action is to develop a guide to support organizations involved in marine megafauna study and conservation in the WCR in their funding research. The document will describe the various public and private, national and international funds and provide tips to develop a funding plans.