

Memorandum 2/11/2018

AS3: Reducing the effects of shipping on biodiversity

This memo provides a summary of reports submitted on the session AS3 organized at the Arctic Biodiversity Session in Rovaniemi, Finland, October 9-12 organized by the Wildlife Conservation Society of Canada.

Attendance: 60

Arctic Biodiversity Assessment recommendation themes most prominently addressed in the session:

- Ecosystem-based Management
- Addressing stressors
- Improving knowledge and public awareness

Key points raised in the session that were important to note:

- Underwater noise is on the rise all over the World, and also in the Arctic. Shipping and underwater noise are significant stressors to Arctic marine mammals, but mitigation tools may work well to reduce these stressors.
- Arctic animals are less used to noise than those of other waters, which renders them more sensitive, leading to behavioural changes.
- There are still significant knowledge gaps on the effects of noise in marine Arctic biodiversity as well as on their magnitude.
- WWF has created a set of communications materials and guidelines (using both scientific and traditional knowledge) for mariners to help them navigate through the North-West passage minimizing their effect on wildlife.

Recommendations/actions identified for how to deal with the issues raised in the session:

- Assess whether existing guidelines for reducing underwater noise are sufficient for the Arctic.
- Focus mitigation efforts on areas where marine mammals are at the most risk of impacts from shipping.
- Working directly with mariners is a key way to reduce impacts of shipping on Arctic marine mammals.
- Further research and transboundary cooperation are needed in order to understand underwater noise and its effects in the Arctic.
- Task for CAFF: urgent need for a pan-Arctic database on sea routes and sensitive areas to help navigation through the Arctic. A one-stop shop for mariners to implement Article 11 of the Polar Code.

Take home message from the session:

- Underwater noise is a problem on the rise in the Arctic Ocean, with important implications for marine mammal behaviour. Further information is required, as well as a systematized information

source to help mariners and other actors minimize the impact of their operations on wildlife (that CAFF could take upon as its task).

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