



## **Information on “Capacity-building in ocean affairs and the law of the sea, including marine science”**

### **1. Progress to date on declaring Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean and Black Seas**

ACCOBAMS marine protected areas work began with the nomination and acceptance by the Parties of four pilot MPAs in 2002. One of these, Lošinj Dolphin Reserve, has since been designated a reserve by Croatia, but the two in Greece (Kalamos and Southwest Crete) and one in the Ukraine (Cape Sarych to Cape Khersones) have yet to receive protection. In November 2006, MPA work related to cetaceans shifted into high gear with a half-day workshop held in Monaco. This laid the groundwork for cetacean habitat protection in the region as the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee developed criteria and guidelines for setting up MPAs and formulated proposals for 17 new MPAs, with tentative boundaries based on current research. In addition to the four pilot MPAs already agreed by the Parties, the new proposals included:

- Eight proposed MPAs recommended by the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee as part of the Mediterranean Common Dolphin Conservation Plan;
- three cetacean areas proposed for protection by the Black Sea Commission's Round Table on Conservation of Black Sea Cetaceans, in Istanbul, in 2006; and
- Six additional important cetacean areas recommended by the Scientific Committee based on the latest cetacean research in the region.

To date, there has been some progress in a number of the areas, including small portions of the Alborán Sea with proposed and declared Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) within the *Natura 2000* framework as well as traffic separation schemes that have been modified near Cabo de Gata and in the Strait of Gibraltar to protect cetaceans. Only one area has been formally declared, the Regno di Nettuno Marine Protected Area around the island of Ischia, off Naples, Italy. This area protects habitat for mainly short-beaked common dolphins and sperm whales.

#### ***Future Plans and Direction within ACCOBAMS for MPA work***

The implementation of the recommendations of the Scientific Committee (SC) as well as of the Parties of ACCOBAMS in terms of MPAs has only just begun. This work must accelerate in the lead up to 2012 to meet agreed targets. On the high seas, the process stimulated by UNEP's Mediterranean Action Plan will help to identify areas for the protection of marine biodiversity including cetaceans. At the same time, the involvement of ACCOBAM scientists in the CIESM Venice meeting in May 2010 should help gain the involvement of the huge network of Mediterranean scientists working through CIESM and encourage the input of apex predator data from all around the Mediterranean to create important apex predator maps that include cetaceans, thus building a much stronger case for MPA networks.

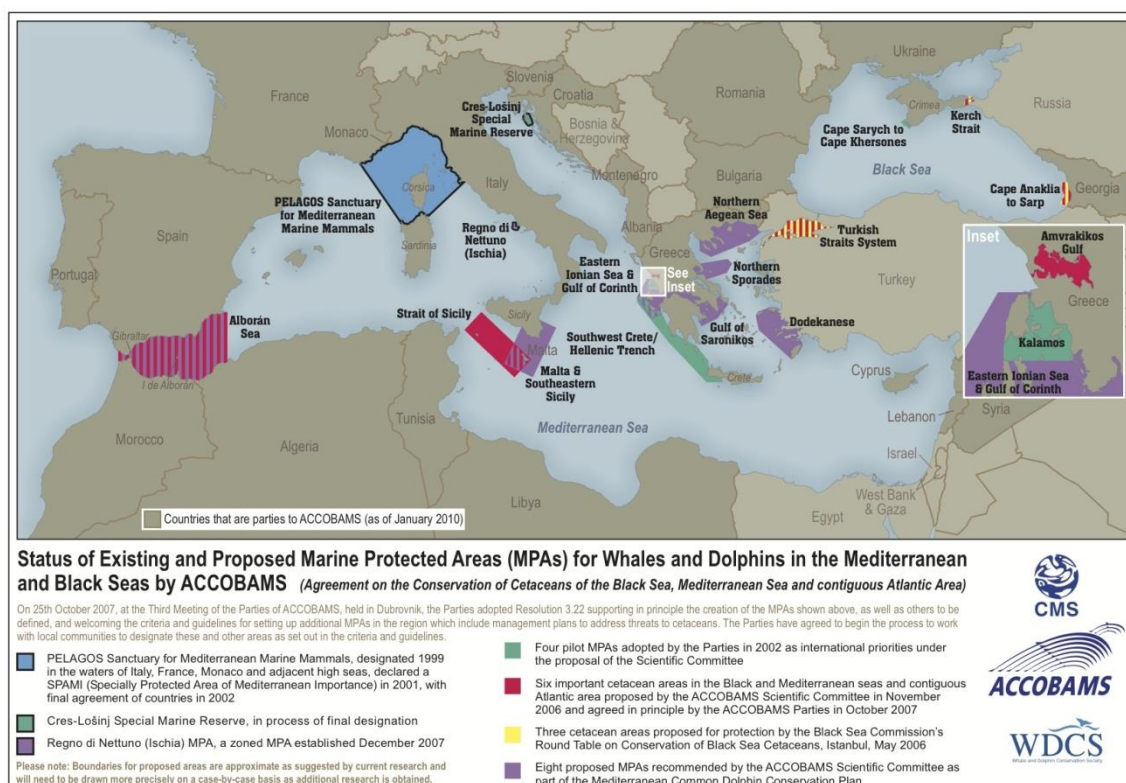
It has been expressed within ACCOBAMS SC the idea that existing MPAs in the ACCOBAMS region should be examined for the existence of cetacean habitat and their possible usefulness in

terms of contributing to cetacean habitat conservation through a network of MPAs. These areas include Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) under the habitats directive that have been created for a variety of reasons as well as various other MPA designations including marine reserves, RAMSAR wetlands and national parks with a marine component.

A first draft working list of these proposed and existing MPAs along with known cetacean critical habitats, country by country, with suspected cetacean habitat was drawn up as part of Hoyt et al (2006). A more detailed database of these areas could be prepared, and where appropriate posted on Google Earth ([www.protectplanetoocean.org](http://www.protectplanetoocean.org)) to help evaluate the presence of cetacean hotspots, effectiveness of management plans in terms of protecting cetaceans and the prospects for improving cetacean conservation through expansion of boundaries or altering the remit of the management plan, or other regulatory provisions. In addition, the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee might invite the Parties to submit their draft plans for MPA networks that include cetacean habitat as well as additional proposals for MPAs with cetacean habitat.

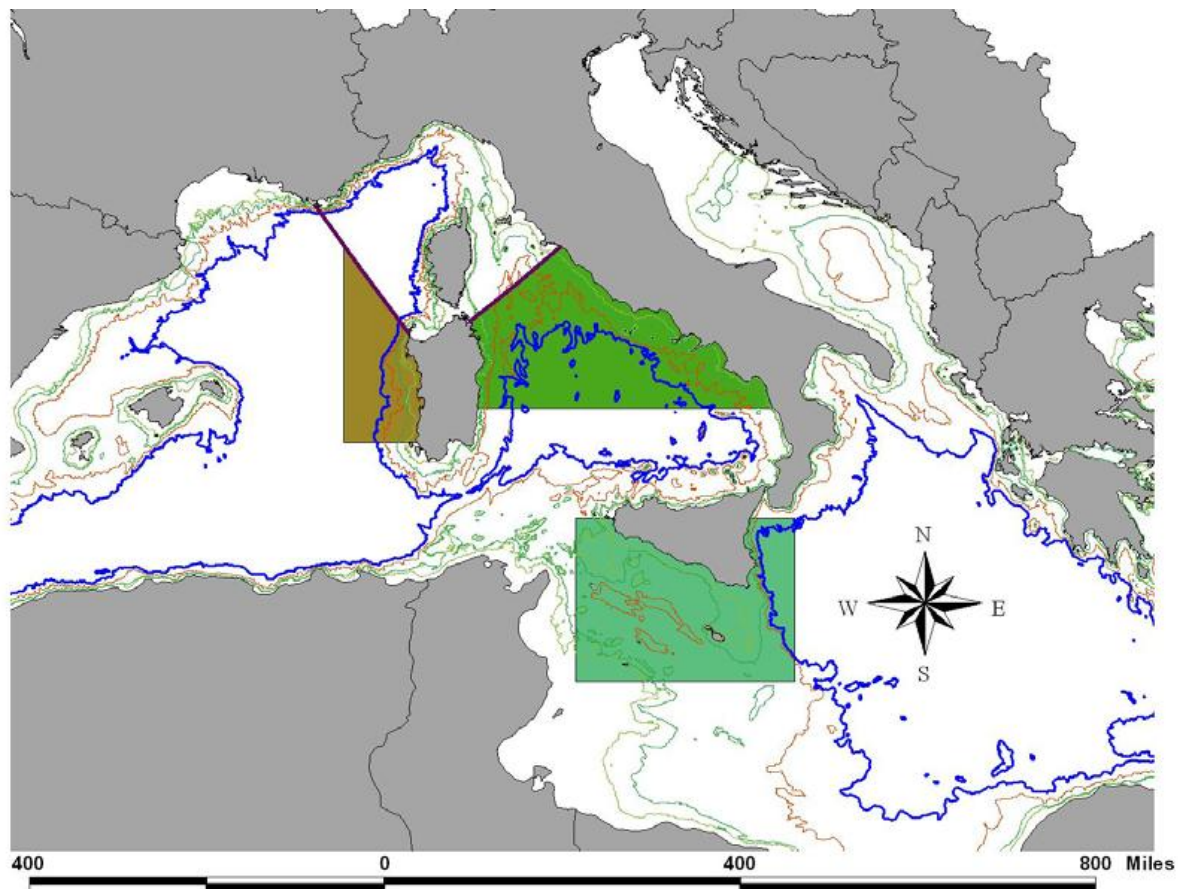
Working with partners to ACCOBAMS, it is recommended that contacts be made with the management bodies of each of these areas and a plan drawn up to help create a network of MPAs to help protect cetaceans with consideration of ways that it might effectively add to the conservation prospects of cetaceans in the region.

It is recognized that MPAs and MPA networks are not the only route for habitat conservation. In some national waters and potentials for high seas, marine spatial planning, including ocean zoning, can provide a framework for accommodating the widest range of stakeholders or ocean-users in a potentially less combative process. It is envisioned that some countries, especially those that have been slow to embrace the idea of MPAs and MPA networks, might engage in marine spatial planning including habitat protection for cetaceans in MPAs, special zones or the equivalent.



Further monitoring actions have been funded by the Italian Ministry of the Environment and will be conducted during winter and summer 2010, with similar protocols to allow comparisons between different years and to provide baseline data for assessing trends over the years. In particular, a first aerial survey will be conducted in the Strait of Sicily (Figure below) in winter 2010, to assess cetacean

presence and density and to aid in suggesting borders for an eventual SPAMI in the area. During the summer months, the northern and central Tyrrhenian Sea will be surveyed (in dark green), to monitor any geographical shifts in annual cetacean distribution and presence.



Preliminary map of the areas to be surveyed in 2010

## **2. Implementation of Joint Programme of the Black Sea Commission and ACCOBAMS Permanent Secretariats on Marine Litter/Marine Mammals Conservation in the Black Sea in collaboration with UNEP**

A Pilot Project on the “Involvement of Black Sea artisanal fisheries in anti-bycatch and anti-Marine Litters activities” started in November 2007. The major objectives and activities of the project are: (a) To study numbers and composition of cetacean bycatches, record birds mortality and ML taken from the sea during normal fishing operations on the seabed in the northwestern Black Sea off the coast of Ukraine; (b) To prepare, publish and disseminate among fishing enterprises, co-operatives and crews of fishing boats the responsible citizenship/professional sectorial guidelines for fishermen and two educational/propagandistic leaflets regarding ML issues and “ghost fishing”.

## **3. Climate Change: Possible Implications for ACCOBAMS**

Climate change will clearly act as a further stressor to cetacean populations. Much of the focus in the literature concerns Polar Regions and the vulnerability of polar species, especially those adapted to live on, under or around the now retreating ice edge. More generally there is concern about those that will not be able to move their populations away from conditions that become less favourable to them to better ones. Oceanic dolphins may be more adaptable than those with a narrower niche. The ACCOBAMS area may offer fewer opportunities for movement than the larger open seas and oceans

and there may be species with restricted niches such as the beaked whales where suitable habitat does not exist beyond that which they are already exploiting.

ACCOBAMS has already made a commitment to further work in this area and this is reflected in its Work Programme (Resolution 3.4):

*"The Secretariat is directed to organise, in cooperation with the Scientific Committee and concerned ACCOBAMS partners and other related organisation (IWC, IOC, etc.), a meeting of experts to discuss (a) prospected and suspected impacts of a sea temperature increase on the cetacean populations in the Agreement area, (b) implications of such impacts for the current conservation effort (e.g., a discussion of the application of current IUCN Red List criteria in the light of climate change), (c) recommendations for monitoring and research programmes to understand and detect climate change effects on cetaceans in the Agreement area, and (d) suggest possible mitigation measures."*

The ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee will need to further progress this and in due course consider the outputs from this meeting of experts and further refine its efforts to protect cetaceans including integration of climate change effects; what research might then be a priority to conduct to elucidate further effects; and what other international or regional initiatives it might collaborate with to enhance its efforts.

#### **4. Status of the implementation of the ByCBAMS framework**

An Italian **Workshop on cetacean by-catch and depredation** (Rome, 10-11 September 2007) was coordinated by the Central Institute of Marine Research and the ACCOBAMS Secretariat. The main objectives were:

- 1) to draw up an overview on the interactions between fisheries and cetaceans in Italian waters;
- 2) to draft a proposal for a by-catch monitoring plan in Italian waters; and
- 3) to comment on the draft protocol for data collection.

In Spring 2007, in the frame of the *"Bycatch Italia-ACCOBAMS"*, a **pilot study**, coordinated by the research SME Consorzio Mediterraneo, was launched along the Italian coasts of the Ligurian and Tyrrhenian seas (Liguria, Tuscany, Lazio, Campania, Calabria, Sicily and Sardinia) aimed at obtaining information on by-catch events and depredation in small scale fisheries (*"piccola pesca"*). This pilot project entailed 600 direct interviews carried out by experienced researchers, with coverage of about 15%. Direct observations were also carried out in some areas amounting to 60 days at sea. From this preliminary study it was confirmed that the rate of incidental capture of cetaceans in legal gears seems very low.

A strong collaboration was established between **ACCOBAMS and the GFCM**, including two workshops (in Tunisia and Italy); a questionnaire for rapid assessment of the knowledge on bycatch and depredation in the relevant area; and the institution of a GFCM transversal Working Group on the issue of by-catch of cetaceans and other endangered marine species.

In this spirit, a 2-day workshop will be organised (17-18 September 2008, Rome) by the ACCOBAMS Secretariat in collaboration with GFCM, the Italian Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry and ICRAM. Its Terms of Reference include:

1. National overviews on the current status of by-catch and critical review of historical data in all ACCOBAMS Countries;
2. Adoption by the ACCOBAMS scientific community of standard protocol on data collection and its submission to representatives of the ACCOBAMS Parties;
3. Discussion on the implementation of the ByCBAMS framework within the ACCOBAMS area.

## **5. Noise pollution**

During their last meeting (October 2007), ACCOBAMS Contracting Parties have agreed on the appropriate tools for assessing the impacts of underwater noise on cetaceans in order to establish mitigation measures to reduce these impacts and a Set of Guidelines which will guide Governments in the application of such measures.

A Working Group; composed by France, Italy, Spain and paired with the Ospar Convention, the WDCCS and the NRDC; is currently developing the Guidelines which will be presented to ACCOBAMS Contracting Parties by the end of 2010 for adoption.