

INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION FOR



THE NORTHWEST ATLANTIC FISHERIES

Serial No.1762  
(B.e.66)

ICNAF Comm.Doc. 67/7

ANNUAL MEETING - JUNE 1967

Report of the Meeting of Panel A (Seals)  
Copenhagen, 13-14 October 1966



Serial No. 1762  
(B.e.66)

30/12/66

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28 December 1966

Report of the meeting of Panel A (Seal)  
Copenhagen, 13-14 October 1966

The meeting was opened at 1010 hrs, 13 October 1966, by the Chairman of the Panel, Dr A.W.H. Needler (Canada). Delegates and their advisers from the member countries, Canada, Denmark and Norway, were present (Appendix I).

The Chairman introduced Mr Hans Tambs-Lyche, Secretary General of ICES, who welcomed the delegates and drew attention to a history of Charlottenlund Castle prepared by the ICES staff.

The Norwegian delegate, Mr Lund, expressed the desire of the Norwegian Government and industry to have the effective cooperation already established among the countries sealing in the Northwest Atlantic continued under ICNAF.

The Danish delegate, Mr Løkkegaard, welcomed the meeting on behalf of the Danish Government and pointed out that the Danish Ministry for Greenland would be taking an active part in the Panel deliberations since the Danish seal fishing in the Northwest Atlantic was conducted by the Greenlanders.

Agenda

The Agenda was reviewed and adopted with the addition of new items 5 and 6 which were suggested by the Norwegian delegate (Appendix 2).

The Chairman reviewed the request of the International Society for the Protection of Animals (ISPA) to have observers at the meeting. He explained that arrangements had been made to have Mr T. Scott, Chief Administrator of the ISPA, attend the meeting only to present a brief to the Panel. The Panel concurred with the Chairman's arrangements and agreed to hear the brief after lunch.

Rapporteur

It was agreed that Mr L.R. Day should act as Rapporteur for the meeting.

Status of the Catch and Research Carried Out

The Chairman called for reports on the status of the catch and research carried out. Dr Sergeant (Canada) reviewed Contributions No. 2, 3 and 4 (Appendix 2) to the meeting. Good evidence was presented that the harp seal stocks of the "Gulf Area" (includes all the waters and territories west of a straight line between the lighthouse at Amour Point on the coast of Labrador and the lighthouse on Flowers Island in Flowers Cove, Newfoundland) and "Front Area" (includes all the waters of the Strait of Belle Isle and the Atlantic Ocean east of a straight line between the lighthouse at Amour Point on the east coast of Labrador and the lighthouse on Flowers Island in Flowers Cove, Newfoundland) are separate, that the Gulf population has remained in good condition due principally to exploitation slightly below the optimum sustained yield. Estimates of the production of young harp seals in the Front Area, which showed a strong decrease in harp seal production from 1950, were questioned as low by delegates due to the uncertain results of the capture-recovery experiments. It was agreed that greater consideration should be given by the scientists to obtaining better estimates.

Dr Hansen (Denmark) reviewed Contribution No. 5 (Appendix 3) which pointed out the importance of seals to the Greenlanders in East Greenland and in the northern part of West Greenland. Rising prices for seal skins have improved the living standards of the Greenlanders.

Mr Vibe (Denmark) presented statistics on the catch of harp seals from old Greenland trading records starting in 1793 which indicated that seal stocks in Greenland waters have not decreased in number. In the 19th Century they were abundant in the southern areas; now they are abundant in the northern areas (Contribution No. 7) (Appendix 3).

Dr Rasmussen (Norway) reviewed Contribution No.6 (Appendix 3). The catch statistics for the Norwegian harp seal fishery on the Front show an increase in catch from about 25,000 seals per year during the 1938-39 period to about 147,000 per year during the 1962-66 period. Increased horsepower of the Norwegian sealing vessels and their resulting increased efficiency in the ice was shown by Mr Øritsland (Norway) to be largely responsible for the increased catch. Catch per unit effort-day calculated by Mr Øritsland showed a steady decrease from 1956 to 1966 in the Front area (Contribution No.8) (Appendix 3). The meeting adjourned at 1215 hrs.

#### ISPA Brief

The meeting was reconvened at 1410 hrs to hear Mr T. Scott of the ISPA present the Society's brief. It contained suggestions for the humane killing of seals in the fisheries in the Northwest Atlantic. Mr Scott was assured by the Canadian, Danish and Norwegian delegates that steps had been taken in present national regulations to reduce and eliminate cruel sealing practices and that further steps were being contemplated in order to include as many of the ISPA and other agencies' proposals as possible. The Norwegian delegate expressed his country's agreement with the work and aims of the ISPA. He spoke of the efforts, through research on killing techniques, education of sealers and cooperation with Norwegian SPCAs to abolish cruel sealing practices. The Danish delegate pointed out the difference between the local Greenland seal hunting practices and the commercial sealing practices on the Front and in the Gulf areas. Mr Scott recognized that there were social, economic and political problems involved and that steps must be taken slowly. Mr Scott and his research consultant, Mr Arthur Bourne, then withdrew after thanking the delegates for their consideration. The meeting agreed that the brief should be received and duplicated for circulation to the Panel membership.

#### Present Conservation Measures

The Chairman called for a review of the present conservation measures by member countries. Dr Sprules (Canada) drew attention to Contribution No.1 (Appendix 3) which presented the Canadian seal protection regulations in effect for 1966. Mr Lund (Norway) reviewed the Norwegian Law of 14 December 1951 on the killing of seals and the Royal Decree of 19 February 1965 regulating the catch of harp and hood seals in the Newfoundland area. It was pointed out that they correspond largely to the Canadian regulations in force for the Front area. Mr Lassen (Denmark) said there were no extensive laws or regulations in Greenland. There are, however, some local regulations. The Chairman pointed out that both the Norwegian and Canadian regulations recognize the need for the natives in the Arctic and Greenland waters to reap the benefits from the fishery.

#### Research to be Undertaken

In considering the research to be undertaken, the Chairman suggested that a group of scientific advisers to the Panel be set up with terms of reference from the Panel. At Mr Lund's suggestion, the following terms of reference were adopted:

- (1) State of the stocks
- (2) Biological and statistical information needed
- (3) Data required
- (4) Practical aspects of cooperative research
- (5) Relationship to the ICNAF Standing Committee on Research and Statistics.

It was agreed that the scientific advisers to the Panel should be for

<u>Canada</u>	Dr Sergeant and/or others as required,
<u>Denmark</u>	Dr Hansen Mr Vibe and/or others as required,
<u>Norway</u>	Dr B. Rasmussen Mr Øritsland and/or others as required.

It was further agreed that the scientific advisers should meet at 0930 hrs, 13 October 1966, to consider the above terms of reference.

#### Required Conservation Measures

Under required conservation measures, the Chairman suggested that the Panel might be prepared to propose to the next meeting of ICNAF the regulations already established by the countries as a "gentlemen's agreement", along with other regulations which might be felt necessary as a result of the discussions of the scientific advisers. This, he contended, would avoid any backward steps in measures to manage the seal stock. The meeting agreed to this proposal. The "gentlemen's agreement" for sealing regulations in the Front Area for the 1966 season includes the following:

1. An open season for sealing from March 12 to April 30
2. A prohibition against killing adult harp seals in whelping or breeding patches.
3. A prohibition against the use of helicopters or other aircraft in sealing operations with the exception that helicopters and other aircraft may be used from a land base to search for seals only.
4. Seal skins shall be removed from the ice to the base of operations within 24 hours from the day the seals are killed except under unusual circumstances and that no additional seals shall be killed unless all seal skins taken previously have been removed from the ice to the base of operations or an active effort is being made to remove such skins from the ice.

Mr Karlsen (Canada) said that the sealing industry was considering an aircraft charter to obtain a visual survey of the seal distribution and abundance on the Front in the 1967 season and suggested that the scientific advisers be asked to evaluate the proposal. The meeting agreed that this item should be part of the terms of reference for the meeting of scientific advisers.

It was agreed that the Panel would reconvene at 1430 hrs, 14 October 1966, to consider the preliminary report of the scientific advisers, to continue discussion of required conservation measures, to discuss the 1967 seal regulations and to establish the date and place of the next meeting of the scientific advisers to the Panel and of the Panel itself. The meeting adjourned at 1530 hrs, 13 October 1966.

The meeting reconvened at 1500 hrs, 14 October 1966. Dr Hansen (Denmark) presented the report of the scientific advisers to the Panel. The report as adopted by the Panel is attached as Appendix 4.

The Chairman called for further discussion of the required conservation measures. The Panel took note that the "gentlemen's agreement" already established by the sealing countries for regulation of the seal fisheries in the Front Area of the Northwest Atlantic would be continued for the 1967 sealing season. Following further discussion the Panel agreed

that the sealing regulations now in force for the Front Area should be recommended to the 1967 ICNAF meeting for application to the 1968 sealing season and that notification of any amendments from member countries to the regulations for the 1968 sealing season should be presented to Panel members not later than 31 January 1967 for consideration at the next meeting of the Panel in association with the 1967 Annual Meeting of the Commission.

#### Next Meeting

The meeting agreed that the scientific advisers to Panel A and the Panel itself would meet in association with the 1967 Annual Meeting of the Commission, the dates and times to be fixed later.

The Chairman expressed the thanks of the Panel participants to ICES for its meeting facilities and to the Danish Government for its hospitality.

There being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 1630 hrs, 14 October 1966.

Meeting of Panel A (Harp and Hood Seals)  
Copenhagen, 13-14 October 1966

Participants

CANADA

Dr A.W.H.Needler, Department of Fisheries, Ottawa, Ontario  
Dr W.M.Sprules, Department of Fisheries, Ottawa, Ontario  
Mr H. Bradley, Department of Fisheries, St. John's, Nfld.  
Dr D. Sergeant, Fisheries Research Board of Canada, Ste. Anne de Bellevue, Quebec  
Mr K. Karlsen, representing Maritime Industry  
Mr J. Grieve, representing Newfoundland Industry

DENMARK

Mr K. Løkkegaard, Ministry of Fisheries, Copenhagen  
Mr H. Lassen, Ministry for Greenland, Copenhagen  
Dr P.M.Hansen, Grønlands Fiskeriundersøgelse, Charlottenlund  
Dr Erik B. Smidt, Grønlands Fiskeriundersøgelse, Charlottenlund  
Mr Chr. Vibe  
Mr E. Lemche  
Mr P.K.Nilsson

NORWAY

Mr O. Lund, Directorate of Fisheries, Bergen  
Dr E. Rasmussen, Institute of Marine Research, Bergen  
Mr E. Aas, Ministry of Fisheries  
Mr T. Øritsland, Directorate of Fisheries, Bergen  
Mr P. Karlsen  
Mr Guttorm Jakobsen

GUESTS

Mr H. Tambs-Lyche, Secretary General, ICES, Charlottenlund Slot  
Dr E. Poulsen, Danish Fishery Investigations, Charlottenlund Slot

Meeting of Panel A (Harp and Hood Seals)  
Copenhagen, 13-14 October 1966

Agenda

1. Opening remarks by Chairman, Dr A.W.H.Needler (Canada)
2. Selection of Rapporteur
3. Report on the status of the catch and research carried out
4. Review of present conservation measures
5. Consideration of research to be undertaken
6. Required conservation measures
7. Date and place of next meeting
8. Other business
9. Approval of Panel Report
10. Adjournment

Meeting of Panel A (Harp and Hood Seals)  
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Working Papers

- Contribution No.1 - Canadian seal protection regulations in force for 1966  
(Order-in-Council P.C.1966-904)
- Contribution No.2 - Canadian sealing statistics. by D.E.Sergeant
- Contribution No.3 - History of research on harp and hood seals in Canada.  
by D.E.Sergeant
- Contribution No.4 - On the population dynamics of the western harp seal stocks.  
by D.E.Sergeant
- Contribution No.5 - Harp seal (*Phoca groenlandica*) and hooded seal (*Cystophora  
cristata*). by Paul M. Hansen
- Contribution No.6 - Norwegian sealing off Newfoundland. by B. Rasmussen and  
T. Øritsland
- Contribution No.7 - Greenland trading records of seal, 1800-1960
- Contribution No.8 - Norwegian catch per unit effort-day of harp and hooded  
seals in the "Front Area", 1938-1966.

Other Papers

International Society for the Protection of Animals (ISPA) Brief, presented  
by Mr T.H.Scott, Chief Administrator, ISPA

First Report of Scientific Advisers to Panel A  
Copenhagen, 14 October 1966

Present:     Canada     D.E.Sergeant  
                                  W.M.Sprules

Denmark    Paul M. Hansen (Chairman)  
                                  Chr. Vibe

Norway     B. Rasmussen  
                                  T. Øritsland  
                                  G. Jakobsen (Adviser)

Present Knowledge - Harp Seals

From evidence presented at this meeting, it was agreed that the herds of harp seals in the Gulf and on the Front may be regarded as separate and self-sustaining stocks.

Available evidence indicates that the Gulf stock is in relatively good state and can sustain a catch at the present level.

Available evidence indicates a decline of the Front stock during the last 15 years but at the present time the scientific advisers are unable to quantify the decline.

Present Knowledge - Hood Seals

The hooded seals occurring in the Gulf and on the Front may be regarded as belonging to one stock.

There has been an increase in catch since 1946 and there is no evidence of a decrease in the hood seal stock in contrast with the indicated decrease in the harp seal stock.

Information Required

It is felt that more information is particularly required in respect of:

- (1) intermixing of stocks of both species,
- (2) size of stock of Front harp seals,
- (3) parameters of population dynamics of Front harp seals,
- (4) food habits of both species.

Techniques

To obtain the above information the following techniques appeared to be the most fruitful:

- (1) tagging, craniometry and serology (Canada and Norway),  
Greenland catch statistics in relation to climatic changes (Denmark)
- (2) aerial photographic survey of whelping harp seals on the Front  
extended to northern Labrador (Canada)
- (3) sampling of teeth and ovaries of Front harp seals during the moult  
period by a special expedition (Canada), and sampling of teeth and  
ovaries in Greenland (Denmark) and from commercial catches (Norway)
- (4) Stomach analyses (all 3 countries)

Statistics

It is recommended that catch statistics be separated for Front and Gulf Areas and for ships, aircraft and landmen, and as far as possible by pelt categories.

For ships, effort data should include gross and net tonnage, engine horsepower, number of men and duration of voyage.