



# MARINE MAMMAL COMMISSION

9 October 2020

Ms. Angela Somma  
National Marine Fisheries Service  
Office of Protected Resources  
1325 East West Highway  
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Ms. Somma:

The Marine Mammal Commission (Commission) has reviewed the National Marine Fisheries Service request for information on the southern right whale (*Eubalaena australis*) for use in the 5-year review of its status under the Endangered Species Act (85 Fed. Reg. 49640). The announcement requested information on this whale species that has become available since the last 5-year review in 2015.

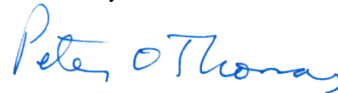
In its response to the 2014 request for information for the previous review, the Commission pointed to several reports generated from International Whaling Commission (IWC) meetings and activities. The IWC Scientific Committee has continued its work with respect to the status of regional populations of southern right whales around the Southern Hemisphere. The Commission again calls attention to the reports of the IWC Scientific Committee's annual meetings (66A (2015), 66B (2016), 67A (2017), 67B (2018), 68A (2019), and 68B (2020)) and their relevant Annexes. These reports, listed in Annex I of this letter with a link to access them, provide updates on research, assessment and management specific to each of the currently recognized southern right whale populations.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List status of the southern right whale was assessed in 2018. While the species as a whole was listed as Least Concern (Cooke & Zerbini 2018), the assessment states that "[S]ome breeding subpopulations are still very small and may need special protection to survive." In 2018, a separate Red List assessment listed the "southern right whale Chile-Peru subpopulation" as Critically Endangered, with fewer than 50 mature individuals (Cooke 2018). The IWC reports referenced above include annual reviews of assessment and management efforts for this regional population, based since 2017 on reports submitted to the Sub-Committee on Cetacean Stocks that are or might be the Subject of Conservation Management Plans (CMPs). For example, SC/68B/CMP/18 "IWC Eastern South Pacific Southern Right Whale Conservation Management Plan – Progress Report April 2020" was submitted to and discussed at the most recent Scientific Committee annual meeting in April 2020.

To further assist in this review the Commission will provide a number of other relevant reports and journal articles along with this letter (Annex II).

We hope this information is helpful and look forward to the results of your review.

Sincerely,



Peter O. Thomas. Ph.D.,  
Executive Director

## References

Cooke, J.G. & Zerbini, A.N. 2018. *Eubalaena australis*. *The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species* 2018: e.T8153A50354147. <https://dx.doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.UK.2018-1.RLTS.T8153A50354147.en>. Downloaded on 29 September 2020.

Cooke, J.G. 2018. *Eubalaena australis*(Chile-Peru subpopulation). *The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species* 2018: e.T133704A50385137. <https://dx.doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.UK.2018-1.RLTS.T133704A50385137.en>. Downloaded on 29 September 2020.

## Annex I

Information on southern right whales can be found in the reports of the following meetings of the IWC Scientific Committee: 66A (2015), 66B (2016), 67A (2017), 67B (2018), 68A (2019), and 68B (2020). These documents can be found at: <https://iwc.int/documents>. The relevant agenda items and page numbers are provided to assist in locating information to inform the 5-year review.

### **Report of the Scientific Committee SC68B Rev1 (2020), no relevant Annexes**

Agenda Item 8.2.3 Southern right whales not the subject of CMPs (pp35-39)

9.1 Stocks with existing CMPs: new information and progress with previous recommendations (pp45-47)

9.1.1 Southeast Pacific southern right whales

9.1.2 Southwest Atlantic southern right whales

### **Supplement 21 (2020): Report of the Scientific Committee SC68A and Annexes**

9.2.4 Southern right whales not the subject of CMPs (pp27-28)

Annex H: Report of the Sub-Committee on Other Southern Hemisphere Whale Stocks (pp129-130, 138-142)

10.1 Stocks with existing CMPs: new information and progress with past recommendations (p32)

10.1.1 SE Pacific southern right whales

10.1.2 SW Atlantic southern right whales

Annex O: Report of the Sub-Committee on Cetacean Stocks that are or might be the Subject of Conservation Management Plans (CMPs) (pp260-262)

**Supplement 20 (2019): Report of the Scientific Committee SC67B and Annexes**

9.4.3 Southern Hemisphere right whales not the subject of CMPs (South Africa Australia, New Zealand) (pp36-37)

Annex H: Southern Hemisphere right whales not the subject of CMPs (pp224-228)

10. Cetacean Stocks that are or might be the Subject of Conservation Management Plans (CMPs). (SE Pacific, SW Atlantic) (pp37-39)

Annex O: Cetacean Stocks that are or might be the Subject of Conservation Management Plans (CMPs) Items 2.1.1, 2.1.2 (pp365-368)

**Supplement 19 (2018): Report of the Scientific Committee SC67A and Annexes**

9.4.3 Southern Hemisphere right whales not the subject of CMPs (South Africa Australia, New Zealand) (pp30-31)

Annex H: Southern Hemisphere right whales not the subject of CMPs (pp207-209)

10.1 Cetacean Stocks that are or might be the Subject of Conservation Management Plans (CMPs) SRWs discussed under item 10.1.1 (SE Pacific SRWs) (pp31-32) and 10.1.2 (SW Atlantic SRWs) (pp32).

Annex O: Report of the sub-committee on Cetacean Stocks that are or might be the Subject of Conservation Management Plans (CMPs). Item 2.1 (pp348-9) is SE Pacific SRWs and 2.2 (p349-50) is SW Atlantic SRWs.

**Supplement 18 (2017): Report of the Scientific Committee SC66B and Annexes**

10.8 Southern Hemisphere (SH) right whales (pp 38-40).

Annex F: Report of the sub-committee on bowhead, right and gray whales (pp193-197).

**Supplement 17 (2016): Report of the Scientific Committee SC66A and Annexes**

10.8 Southern Hemisphere right whales (pp36-37)

Annex F: Report of the sub-committee on bowhead, right and gray whales (pp211-214).

Annex II

Additional materials will be submitted through the Federal e-Rulemaking portal. Many of these report on continuing studies of southern right whale health at Península Valdés, Argentina and the work of the Southern Right Whale Health Monitoring Program (<https://ballenas.org.ar/programa-de-monitoreo-sanitario-ballena-franca-austral-pmsbfa/>).