

North Atlantic Right Whale Recovery Plan
Southeast U.S. Implementation Team, OCT 04-05, 2016
Guana Tolomato Matanzas National Estuarine Research Reserve
in Ponte Vedra, FL

KEY OUTCOMES MEMORANDUM

I. Overview

The North Atlantic Right Whale Recovery Plan Southeast U.S. Implementation Team (SEIT) conducted a two-day meeting on October 4th and 5th, 2016 at the Guana Tolomato Matanzas National Estuarine Research Reserve in Ponte Vedra, Florida. The SEIT's Forum was conducted from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm on October 4th and was open to the public. The SEIT deliberated from 8:30 am to 12:00 pm on October 5th (ended early due to forecasted track of Hurricane Matthew). The Forum agenda was planned with input from the SEIT in order to facilitate priority information updates and discussion with participants and SEIT members. Agendas from both days are attached. The October 5th SEIT deliberations focused on the following primary objectives:

- SEIT Business
- Forum debrief

This Key Outcomes memorandum summarizes the primary results of the SEIT deliberations on October 5th. In general, the synthesis integrates the main themes discussed at the meeting and are presented in five main sections: Overview, Participants, Meeting Materials, Key Outcomes, and Next Steps. The Key Outcomes section is further segmented into the following sections:

- Welcome and Meeting Kick Off. This section provides a brief overview of meeting purpose and agenda review.
- SEIT business
- Focused SEIT discussions
- Consensus Actions. This section summarizes consensus recommendations of the SEIT.
- Other. This section summarizes other topics discussed during the meeting.

II. Participants

The SEIT meeting was attended by 11 of the 12 Team members: Nancy Allen, Lance Garrison, Clay George, Mike Getchell, Amy Knowlton, William McLellan, Katie Moore (phone), Becky Shortland, Leslie Ward (Team Lead), Tom Wright, and Sharon Young. Barb Zoodsma and Claire Surrey-Marsden represented NOAA Fisheries (NMFS). Bill Kavanaugh was not present.

III. Meeting Materials

The following materials were provided to SEIT members (distributed via email prior to the meeting):

- The final meeting agenda
- Spreadsheet containing draft 5 year plan ideas

IV. Key Outcomes

Below is a summary of the main topics and items discussed during the meeting. This summary is not intended to be a meeting transcript and is not necessarily in chronological order of discussions. Rather, it provides an overview of the main topics covered, the primary points and options raised in the discussions, and areas of full or emerging consensus.

A. Welcome and Meeting Kick Off

The meeting kicked off with a brief review of the meeting purpose and agenda. Hurricane Mathew affected meeting plans - throughout the day, the SEIT monitored the developments of Hurricane Matthew and adjourned early due to updates in the forecasted storm path (noon). The SEIT agreed to review Consensus Actions from last meeting, Forum key points, and postpone further discussion until a call could be scheduled.

B. SEIT Business

The SEIT discussed possible dates for the spring SEIT meeting. There was most support for 11-13 April with 25-27 April as backup.

Nancy Allen is retiring in January so a replacement will need to be considered if Navy participation on the SEIT is desired. Someone with a biology background would come from Environmental while operational-related people would come from Fleet Forces (e.g. Taura Huxley, Gene Nissen, Joel Bell, Laura Bush, etc.). B. Zoodsma noted that SERO preferred to wait until the completion of 5-year planning exercise before appointing/reappointing SEIT members.

C. Focused Discussions

Forum Review

Some members expressed a concern that information from the presentations is not adequately retained. The Team discussed possible options for retaining the information, these included:

- Ask presenters to have one summary slide at the end of their presentation that addresses specific points requested by SEIT or their key points
- Retain a copy of the presentations for deliberation the following day
- Minutes of Forum (was a practice in past years, but is time intensive)
- Ask presenters to provide bullets containing key points of their presentations or an abstract for the SEIT

Key points from Forum included:

- Recent mortalities, and recent observations of poor health –especially in reproductive females, are of concern. A. Knowlton noted that females with a health score <67% don't reproduce.
- A consideration for mortality response in the Southeast U.S. is that M. Moore is no longer an available necropsy team leader. Updated plan needed for large carcasses in SEUS, gaps noted in the SEUS stranding network and lack of formalized agreements to land carcasses.

- Calving habitat: variability in timing and habitat use, not a single pulse movement in fall and spring. Acoustic information reinforces variability in residence patterns and movement among habitats (presented at previous Forums). Discussion on climate change-related environmental impacts on NARW distribution and the need for down-scaled regional environmental models (current climate model scales are too large) to combine with species models.
- Duke model: Updates expected in 2017. Scale considerations --10km² cell size/month, is this the most appropriate scale to delineated NARW habitat in the mid-Atlantic? Does this help us achieve needed actions in the SEIT Mid-Atlantic plan? AMAPPS model also underway.

Consensus Actions from Last Meeting: Review

- Compile list of relevant work for upcoming population workshop. Accomplished –Lance presented.
- PAM detection distances –incomplete, present status report at spring SEIT meeting
- Duke University modeling/data input –Accomplished.
- A. Knowlton will investigate biopsy blubber uses. Accomplished –A. Knowlton emailed a report to the SEIT on May 16, 2016.
- Investigate climate change vulnerability in region for right whales –vulnerability assessment tool for protected species. (Navy also has projections for climate change impacts on SE Naval facilities) Climate predictions are on much larger scale than our regional interests.
- B. Zoodsma will compile an example 5-Year Plan Action Item for accessioning SE right whale survey data into Duke model. Accomplished –B. Zoodsma emailed the example to the SEIT.

D. Consensus Actions

- SEIT is interested in writing a letter stating the Team’s concern about entanglements and population impacts. Develop talking points for future disentanglement events to increase public awareness of this important issue.
- Blair/C. George should discuss large whale strandings/SEUS resource needs and present planning needs at future Forum
- L. Ward schedule follow up call due to abbreviated fall meeting, continue 5-year plan discussions

E. Consensus Recommendations

- Timely feedback/identification of removed gear is critical in understanding gear types and fisheries that have the greatest risk to whales

V. Next Steps

- Request update from SERO on progress with the education/outreach strategy implementation.
- Schedule a follow-up SEIT call asap to continue planning discussions