

Bravington, M.V.; Northridge, S.P.; Hammond, P.S.; Palka, D.L. 1998. Criteria for assessing the status of harbour porpoises in the North Sea and adjacent waters: A suggested way forward. Reports of the International Whaling Commission 48:272-286.

Abstract:

In 1995, the Small Cetacean sub-committee considered criteria for 'raising a flag of concern' when assessing the status of North Atlantic harbour porpoise stocks subject to bycatch. The sub-committee noted that there was some arbitrariness in its current criterion of bycatch above 1% of estimated abundance, and recommended further discussion. The sub-committee agreed that the PBR approach (Wade, 1998) was useful and represented an advance over the existing criterion. However, no consensus was reached on whether blanket application of criteria designed for US law, would be most appropriate in the context of the IWC's assessment of harbour porpoise stocks in and around the North Sea. We suggest that a way forward would be to conduct case-specific simulations incorporating the particular sources of uncertainty (such as stock structure) encountered in the North Sea area, where there are fairly good data. Implementation trials for commercial whaling have tried to account for hard-to-quantify uncertainties on a case-by-case basis, by specifying plausible hypotheses consistent with what is known, within a simulation framework. This paper suggests how such a simulation framework might be developed for harbour porpoises in the area of the North Sea and adjacent waters.