

Assessment and Avoidance of Incidental Mortality  
of Antarctic Marine Living Resources

20. The Commission considered a paper submitted by the U.S. Delegation entitled ‘Assessment and Avoidance of Incidental Mortality of Antarctic Marine Living Resources’.

21. Although there does not seem to be any problem with entanglement of animals in lost or discarded fishing gear and other debris in the Convention Area at the present time, there is growing evidence that in other areas significant numbers of non-target fish, birds, marine mammals, turtles and other marine organisms are being caught and killed in lost and discarded fishing gear and other debris, as well as caught and killed incidentally during certain fishing operations.

– Marine Debris

22. To assess the possible sources, fates and effects of marine debris in the Convention Area, it was agreed that members would study and as may be necessary and appropriate, initiate steps to:

- a. survey their nationals who have worked at Antarctic coastal stations or on vessels operating in the Convention Area to determine the nature and location of any past observations or encounters with lost or discarded fishing gear, binding materials, or other man-made debris that have not been reported;
- b. ensure that information is made available about any problems caused by man-made debris fouling propellers, rudders or water intake valves, or sightings of such debris including the species and numbers of animals found entangled therein;
- c. periodically survey beaches, and seal and penguin colonies in the vicinity of their coastal stations and other areas as may be feasible to determine the types, quantities and, as possible, sources of any fishing gear or other debris accumulating there; and
- d. determine the possible utility and feasibility of requiring that vessels engaged in fishing and related activities in the Convention Area maintain an inventory of the types and quantities of netting brought into the Convention Area and a record of the date, place, types and quantities of any gear lost there; and preventing at-sea disposal of non-biodegradable trash.

– Incidental Catch

23. To assess and monitor the species and numbers of birds, marine mammals, and (other organisms) being caught incidentally during fishing operations, it was agreed that members would study and as may be necessary and appropriate, initiate steps to have their vessels engaged in fishing operations record and report the number of birds, marine mammals and (other non-target) species taken incidentally during fishing operations.

– Information and Education

24. It was agreed that steps would be taken by each member, as necessary and appropriate, to ensure that their nationals working in the Convention Area are aware of international and national laws prohibiting or restricting the disposal of netting and other potentially hazardous substances at sea and that measures taken by members to assess, avoid, and mitigate accidental and incidental mortality of Antarctic marine living resources will be reported to the Executive Secretary, for distribution to the members.

– Future Work

25. It was agreed that this item should be included on the agenda of the next annual meeting of the Commission. In this regard, it was also agreed that consideration should be initiated at that meeting of the desirability of marking nets, floats and other potentially hazardous items deployed in the Convention Area and of the desirability of restricting the use of gill nets in the Convention Area.