

NAVTEX MANUAL
Information related with MARINE MAMMALS

Submitted by France

SUMMARY

Executive Summary: This document proposes an evolution of the NAVTEX Manual to include in technical character B2 information concerning the presence of marine mammals (cetaceans)

Action to be taken: Take into account this proposal for the forthcoming review to the NAVTEX Manual

Related documents: NAVTEX Manual

1. Background

1.1 The protection of marine mammals is a stake for states which have a real concern for living species. This is reflected internationally by treaties (Treaty of Antarctica, in particular), and in some coastal states by measures primarily aimed at commercial navigation. This type of Navigation may indeed represent a significant threat to the conservation of marine mammals by the fact that collisions are responsible for serious injury and even, in some cases, death of mammals. The ships themselves may also face serious damage to both the level of the hull as the propulsion machinery. There is also a risk for the safety of passengers on board small ships: a collision with a whale can shock passengers and even make them fall overboard.

1.2 If the main risk factor for collisions is the overlap between habitats of cetaceans and commercial seaways, other parameters come in. It appears that the mortality rate increases significantly with larger units (power accentuated gaps in visibility when the gateway is placed in back of the unit, reduced maneuverability.) Speed is also a factor in the frequency and severity of collisions between ships and whales. All accidents caused damage to the vessels concern speeds of 10 knots at least. At 10.5 knots, a whale involved in a shock has 50% chance of being killed or seriously injured. The speed of 13 knots appears that above which the risk increases markedly and beyond a speed of 15 knots, the lethal outcome is virtually certain. In addition, the hydrodynamic forces created by the movement of ships increase with speed and can attract whales to the machine causing serious injury or death of the animal. Besides, slower speeds allow the two categories to have more time to react and avoid the impact. The evolution of maritime traffic lets consider a potential increased risk.

1.3 Several maritime areas, known for the presence of cetaceans are characterized by technical measures affecting commercial navigation to avoid fatal collision between ships and whales.

- This is the case in Canada in the area of the Gulf of St. Lawrence with the establishment of deceleration zone and zone of vigilance.
- This is also the case off the east coast of the United States from Maine to Florida, with the establishment of special zones (permanent and temporary) where speed is regulated during the year. For transit in those areas frequented by whales, ships with certain characteristics are bound by the state a mandatory report of information including position, course and speed by INMARSAT or radio broadcasting.
- The Corso-Liguro-Provençal basin by the combination of specific conditions is an area of remarkable presence of most cetacean species, known in north-western Mediterranean Sea. This area is not covered by special protection measures for cetaceans. These are drawn in this part of the Mediterranean, by the existence of zooplankton in large quantity and diversity, thus providing favorable and critical habitats for feeding and reproduction. At the same time, the basin is under severe pressure due to dense human population and diverse, also linked to tourist activities and developed a very intense maritime traffic. This traffic is a major source of nuisance on cetacean populations in the area. Collisions between large ships and whales are considered the leading cause of unnatural death of sperm whales and fin whales in the region. Partly for these reasons, France, Italy and Monaco signed an agreement for the creation of a Mediterranean sanctuary for marine mammals (PELAGOS), in Rome, on 25th November 1999 (entered into force on 21st February 2002). No technical measures of information and awareness of ships transiting Pelagos is yet so far implemented.

2. France Proposal

2.1 Technical information measures currently in place in the areas of protection of cetaceans are subject to publications made by the States concerned. These are available on all media types. NAVTEX could be one additional technical mean for the information and awareness of ships transiting areas known for the presence of mammals. The PELAGOS area also corresponds largely to the NAVTEX service area of French and Italian states in the western Mediterranean. With the organization of the NAVTEX service in this area and in order to achieve the objective of protection to minimize the harm to cetaceans and their ecosystems by activities of maritime traffic, NAVTEX information could be the main information type and awareness of ships transiting the area, pending further more collaborative techniques between ships and shore stations.

2.2 It is proposed that the Sub-Committee, at the forthcoming review of the NAVTEX Manual, includes possibility of specific information concerning the presence of marine mammals, especially cetaceans. This proposal assumes that ship regularly informed is more readily aware of the potential hazards.

3. Technical details for the proposal

3.1 France proposes to employ one of the currently not used B2 characters for warnings informing of cetacean presence or, more generally, for warnings concerning protection of the marine environment. For PELAGOS, reception of messages transmitted such a subject indicator character would be highly recommended.

3.2 NAVTEX would give at first general recommendation and secondly updated information on the observed presence of marine mammals. The quoted areas where the presence of marine mammals has been reported are based on sea areas distribution of NAVAREA / METAREA III

3.3 Example of faunistic warning message

Example n°01:

ZCZC WM01 *[If "M" is choosen]*

010740 UTC JUN 13

FRENCH FAUNISTIC WARNING MESSAGE N°001/2013

PELAGOS AREA

[general recommendation]

All ships in PELAGOS AREA are requested

- to have a sharp lookout on presence of cetaceans
- to adopt a safety speed
- to keep a minimum safety distance of 500 meters in case of detection

[updated information]

On the last 4 hours

no detection of cetaceans have been reported

at any case ,safety first

POC: La Garde Traffic / Bonifacio Traffic for any question or report of accident

NNNN

Example n°02:

ZCZC WM02 *[If "M" is choosen]*

011140 UTC JUN 13

FRENCH FAUNISTIC WARNING MESSAGE N°002/2013

PELAGOS AREA

[general recommendation]

All ships in PELAGOS AREA are requested

- to have a sharp lookout on presence of cetaceans
- to adopt a safety speed
- to keep a minimum safety distance of 500 meters in case of detection

[updated information]

On the last 4 hours

detection of a group of cetaceans in PROVENCE AREA

at any case ,safety first

POC: La Garde Traffic / Bonifacio Traffic for any question or report of accident

NNNN

4. Action requested

The Sub-Committee is invited to take into account this proposal for the forthcoming review to the NAVTEX Manual