

**INTERNATIONAL DOLPHIN CONSERVATION PROGRAM**

**INTERNATIONAL REVIEW PANEL (IRP)**

**72<sup>nd</sup> MEETING**

**La Jolla, California (USA)**

**9 October 2023**

**REPORT OF THE MEETING**

**AGENDA**

	Documents
1. Opening of the meeting	
2. Adoption of the agenda	
3. a) Review of Dolphin Mortality Limits (DMLs) for 2023	<a href="#">IRP-72-01</a>
b) Dolphin mortality limits for 2024	<a href="#">IRP-72-02</a>
4. Review of AIDCP <i>List of Qualified Captains</i>	<a href="#">IRP-72-03</a>
5. Review of cases of possible non-compliance (observer data)	<a href="#">IRP-72-04</a>
6. Review of actions by Parties on possible infractions reported by the IRP:	
a) Actions taken since report at the 71 <sup>st</sup> meeting	<a href="#">IRP-72-05</a>
b) Status review of special cases	
7. Report of the Permanent Working Group on Tuna Tracking	
8. Other business	
9. Recommendations for the Meeting of the Parties	
10. Election of the Presider	
11. Date and place of next meeting	
12. Adjournment	

**APPENDIX**

1. List of attendees.
2. Draft revision of the guidelines for maintaining captains in the list of qualified captains.
3. Report of the Chair of the Working Group on Tuna Tracking.

The 72<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the International Review Panel (IRP) was held on 9 October 2023 in La Jolla, California.

**1. Opening of the meeting**

Dr. Arnulfo Franco, Director of the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC), which provides the Secretariat for the Agreement on the International Dolphin Conservation Program (AIDCP), noted that Mr. Enrique de la Vega, of Colombia, Presider of the meeting, was not present and would no longer be able to hold the position.

In the absence of nominations for a presider, Mr. Alvin Delgado, in his capacity as chair of the AIDCP, presided over the panel.

As the delegations were being introduced, it was noted that Colombia, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, the United States, and Venezuela were present in the room, as well as NGO representatives Ernesto Escobar and Rebeca Regenery. Ecuador, Bolivia, and El Salvador participated remotely, as did Rafael Trujillo as industry representative.

## **2. Adoption of the agenda**

The proposed agenda was adopted without changes.

### **3a. Review of Dolphin Mortality Limits for 2023**

The Secretariat summarized the situation regarding the allocation and utilization of Dolphin Mortality Limits (DMLs) in 2023 and cumulatively as of 19 September 2023, as described in document [IRP-72-01 – Review of Dolphin Mortality Limits \(DMLs\) for 2023](#).

It was reported that for 2023, full-year DMLs were granted to 113 vessels. Of these, 98 were utilized by 1 April 2023; thirteen vessels were exempted from losing their DMLs (for not having made sets on dolphins before 1 April 2023) due to *force majeure* and two vessels renounced their DMLs. On the other hand, two DMLs were granted from the Director's reserve (RDA).

The average cumulative mortality per vessel for 2023 was 6.6 dolphins, based on 8,586 dolphin sets and a total mortality of 690 dolphins, resulting in a mortality per set of 0.08. The average DML allocated per vessel for 2023 was 43.36 and no vessel met or exceeded that limit.

### **3b. Dolphin mortality limits requested for 2024**

The Secretariat presented document [IRP-72-02 – DMLs requested for 2024](#), which shows the DML requests for 2024. For that year, 119 vessels requested DMLs and all 119 are qualified to receive them. The Panel found no objections to forwarding these requests for approval at the Meeting of the Parties to the AIDCP.

## **4. Review of AIDCP List of Qualified Captains**

The Secretariat presented document [IRP-72-03 – List of captains](#) showing the changes to the list of qualified captains between 13 July 2023 and 19 September 2023, which include the addition of one captain. During this period, no captain was reinstated or removed from the list.

Under this agenda item, the Secretariat recalled that there was a working document that addresses the initiative to establish a review of the procedure not only for adding captains to the List of Qualified Captains, but also for keeping them on the list over time.

## **5. Review of observer data**

The Secretariat presented document [IRP-72-04 – Cases of possible non-compliance](#), which includes a summary of the data reported by observers from the On-Board Observer Program concerning possible infractions, received and processed by the Secretariat since the 71<sup>st</sup> meeting of the Panel. During this period, the Secretariat reviewed a total of 211 fishing trips and identified three cases of possible non-compliance with dolphin protection equipment requirements for vessels with DMLs, which will be automatically forwarded to the Parties as previously instructed by the Panel. These three cases include two cases of possible non-compliance for not having a high-intensity floodlight that meets the requirements of the Agreement, and one case for not having a rescue raft. Additionally, during this period, one case of possible non-compliance was identified that required review by the Panel. This involved a fishing trip with a DML performed with a captain not in the AIDCP List of Qualified Captains. The Panel decided to refer this case to the corresponding Party for investigation.

Regarding the cases without a floodlight, it was clarified that in one of the cases, there was a floodlight, but not of the required wattage.

The IRP presider highlighted the significance of continuing to observe no major infractions, showing that compliance is quite efficient.

## **6. Review of actions by Parties on possible infractions reported by the IRP:**

### **a) Actions taken since report at the 71<sup>st</sup> meeting**

The Secretariat presented document [IRP-72-05 – Infraction responses](#), which tracks the responses to certain possible infractions identified during the 71<sup>st</sup> meeting of the IRP. It was reported that during the 71<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the Panel, none of the cases in question had been identified. But one such case was presented of an Ecuadorian vessel that had been under investigation for almost two years for possible non-compliance due to alleged harassment while the observer was working. It was noted that the Secretariat had received a letter from the Ecuadorian fishing authority reporting that the infraction had been confirmed and a fine of US\$ 8,500 had been issued.

### **b) Status review of special cases**

The Secretariat reported that there were no special cases to present at the 72<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the International Review Panel.

## **7. Report of the Permanent Working Group on Tuna Tracking**

Mr. Julio Guevara, Chair of the Working Group on Tuna Tracking, presented his report and stated that this Group had not made any recommendations for the International Review Panel. He stated that he would be unable to continue as chair of the group, and therefore an election for a new chair was left pending.

## **8. Other business**

### **a) Procedures for maintaining the AIDCP List of Qualified Captains**

The Secretariat presented a document already revised at previous meetings to amend the requirements for maintaining the list of qualified captains and noted that the document presented included comments received by Colombia and the United States in the intersessional period. The Panel took time to review the changes received and issued a revised version but indicated that this document still required work. Therefore, the Panel decided to revisit it at another opportunity (this version has been appended).

Mexico stated that these guidelines should include not only captains who make sets on dolphins but all purse-seine captains, as accidental sets may occur involving marine mammals and they must be prepared for their release.

## **9. Recommendations for the Meeting of the Parties**

The Panel agreed on the following recommendation for the Meeting of the Parties:

- Approve the allocation of DMLs to the 119 vessels that requested them.

## **10. Election of the Presider**

Mr. Enrique Espinosa, head of Panama's observer program, was elected to preside over the IRP meetings for the next two years, as indicated by AIDCP rules.

## **11. Date and place of next meeting**

The next meeting of the Panel will be held in conjunction with the next meetings of the AIDCP in the second half of 2024.

## **12. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 p.m. local time in La Jolla, California, on 9 October 2023.