2018 Mariner Workshop – Breakout Group
Whale Location Alerts

1 February 2018

Breakout Session Leader – Dr. Lee Alexander, Univ. of New Hampshire

Participants:

- Government
  - Canadian Coast Guard
  - Canadian Hydrographic Service
  - Transport Canada
- Environmental
  - Canadian Whale Institute
  - Clear Seas
  - Green Marine
  - Ocean Group
- Maritime Industry
  - BC Coast Pilots
  - CTMA
  - Holland America
  - IIC Technologies
  - St. Lawrence Global Observatory
- Academic
  - University of New Hampshire
  - Dalhousie University

Purpose: To discuss the challenges/opportunities related to providing mariners timely information about the location of whales in coastal waterways toward the goal of reducing the incidence of ship strikes.

Dr. Alexander began the breakout session by showing a short PP Presentation about the "*WhaleALERT App*" for the Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary near Boston, MA.
https://stellwagen.noaa.gov/protect/whalealert.html
This App provides useful information that is intended to reduce the risk of ship and right whale collisions. Incluides:

- Seasonal Management Areas
- Right Whale Listening Buoys
- Dynamic Management Areas
- Areas to be Avoided
- Mandatory Ship Reporting Areas
- Recommended Routes

However, to use this service, mariners must rely on a "smartphone" device, and be within range of mobile phone networks.

Dr. Alexander also provided a brief explanation about how this type of information could be provided via broadcasts of an AIS Application Specific Message (ASM). Rather than via mobile

phones, the information would be broadcast using an established AIS Base Station network, and be displayed using required shipboard equipment (AIS and ECDIS). While technically feasible, this has not been implemented as an operational service in either Canada or USA.

The ensuing discussion covered three main topics:

1. Collection of information from all stakeholders
   - includes many stakeholders (government, industry, academic, etc.)

2. Compilation and creation of area notices
   - what type of information is needed (what and when)
   - who is responsible

3. Means of dissemination of time critical information
   - date, time and location

Challenges and opportunities
- Many interested players but not always clear as to "who is in charge"
- How to best provide (e.g., website vs smartphones vs AIS broadcast)
- Location of whales:
  Past (historical)
  Present (currently time, or real-time)
  Future (forecast of where "likely to be")
- Different circumstances in Maritimes vs. BC coast

There was general agreement about the need for establishing temporal warning areas and/or corridors. But, less so about specifics on:
- What type of information is critical (e.g., too much vs. too little)
- How to be provided (website vs. AIS broadcast)
- How often to provide (periodic vs continuous)
- Where needed (key areas vs. broad coastal region

Another challenge is how to implement a reliable Whale Alert service (e.g., VHF voice, cell phone, internet, satcomm, AIS broadcast, etc.). Also:
- If provided by a government agency (i.e., competent authority), who should take the lead?
- Should it be voluntary or mandatory?

Finally, there was discussion regarding the need for a national harmonized approach for implementing a Whale Alert service with the suggestion that a meeting be convened of DFO, TC, CCG and industry representatives.