REPORT OF THE EVENT SERIES "STRENGTHENING EFFORTS AND SYNERGIES TO PROTECT CETACEANS IN THE NORTHWESTERN MEDITERRANEAN PSSA"

Introductory webinar: 2 September 2026 -13:00-14:30 CET
In-person/hybrid event: Genoa Boat Show, Italy, 5 October 2026 - 14:00-15:00 CET



ShiPrint Shipping Sector Workshops Series – Yachting and Pleasure Boating Events

Organised by: ACCOBAMS
With the support of: ocean care, SINAY, WE ARE MÉDITERRANÉE, PELAGOS
In collaboration with: WATER REVOLUTION FOUNDATION, CONFINDUSTRIA NAUTICA, SALONE NAUTICO GENOA BOAT SHOW

initiative PELAGOS

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REPORT OF THE EVENT SERIES "STRENGTHENING EFFORTS AND SYNERGIES TO PROTECT CETACEANS IN THE NORTHWESTERN MEDITERRANEAN PSSA" [1]

I. BACKGROUND

1. The event "**Strengthening efforts and synergies to protect cetaceans in the Northwestern Mediterranean Particularly Sensitive Sea Area (PSSA)",** dedicated to the yachting and pleasure boating sector took place on 5 October 2026 in Genoa, Italy, in the framework of the Genoa International Boat Show. It was organized by the ACCOBAMS Secretariat with the support of OceanCare, Sinay, and We Are Méditerranée and in collaboration with the Water Revolution Foundation, Confindustria Nautica and the Genoa International Boat Show.
2. The event brought together more than 50 participants at the Genoa International Boat Show, and 10 online, including more than 20 participants from the yachting sector.
3. Ahead of the in-person event, an introductory webinar was organised on 2 September 2026, bringing together around 30 speakers and participants.
4. This series of events is part of the **ShiPrint project, which benefits from the support of The Pelagos initiative.** This project aims to support the effective implementation of the Associated Protective Measures (APMs) within the Northwestern Mediterranean Particularly Sensitive Sea Area (NW Med PSSA), taking the Pelagos Sanctuary as a pilot area, through the organisation of four stakeholders' workshops, the development of Automatic Identification System (AIS)-based monitoring through the NETCCOBAMS data platform, awareness-raising activities and work towards potential whale-safe guidance or recognition.
5. The project builds on Resolutions adopted by the ACCOBAMS Parties which recognise speed reduction as an effective measure demonstrated to reduce vessel strikes risks where rerouting is not feasible. Speed reduction can also deliver wider benefits by reducing underwater noise and greenhouse gas emissions and various air pollutants.
6. Following workshops dedicated to cargo shipping (Marseille, France, 14 March 2025) and passenger and cruise ferries stakeholders (Genoa, Italy, 2 October 2025), this event constituted the third segment of the ShiPrint workshop series, which seeks to enhance the yachting sector's understanding of its impacts on marine biodiversity and foster dialogue to strengthen efforts to mitigate these impacts.
7. The webinar and the in-person event were moderated by Valérie Pimentel, from OceanCare, and introduced by Maÿlis Salivas, the ACCOBAMS Executive Secretary, and Stefano Pagani Isnardi, Head of the Research Department at Confindustria Nautica.
8. The complete list of participants for the webinar and the in-person event is annexed to this report (ANNEX I – LIST OF PARTICIPANTSand the webinar agenda appears in ANNEX II. WEBINAR AGENDA AND INVITATION

The key takeaways from both the introductory webinar and in-person event held during the Genoa International Boat Show are summarised together.

[1] This document was produced with the financial assistance of the Pelagos Initiative. The contents of this report may not be considered as a reflection of the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation or the Pelagos Initiative's position

II. ENVIRONMENTAL PRESSURES FROM SHIPPING IN THE NORTHWESTERN MEDITERRANEAN

9. The Northwestern Mediterranean Sea area, and particularly the Pelagos Sanctuary, constitute a major biodiversity hotspot, as well as a critical habitat for cetaceans, including Mediterranean populations of fin whales and sperm whales. Distinct from their North Atlantic counterparts, these two populations are classified as Endangered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

10. The important shipping activity in the region increasingly overlaps with critical habitats for cetaceans and poses several major environmental risks, including greenhouse gas emissions, air pollution, underwater noise, and collisions between vessels and cetaceans.

11. Vessel strikes constitute a major threat to cetaceans, and mortality among Mediterranean fin whales from collisions alone exceeds theoretical management thresholds.

12. Given the high spatiotemporal overlap between shipping activity and cetaceans' habitats, rerouting to keep whales and vessels apart does not represent an effective solution in this region. In these conditions, "the only demonstrated measure to reduce fatal collisions with most large whales is to reduce speed", as recognised in Resolution 8.18 adopted by ACCOBAMS Parties.

III. ADOPTION OF THE NW MED PSSA AND CHALLENGES TO ITS IMPLEMENTATION

a) The adoption of the PSSA and its APMs

13. In response to these concerns and following a proposal by four ACCOBAMS countries (Spain, France, Monaco and Italy), the Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC) of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) designated in 2023 the Northwestern Mediterranean Sea as a Particularly Sensitive Sea Area (PSSA).

14. The designation is accompanied by Associated Protective Measures (APMs) designed to monitor and mitigate the risk of vessel strikes involving cetaceans. The APMs encourage mariners to:
    - reduce speed voluntarily between 10 and 13 knots and navigate with caution at a safe speed that enables the vessel to take timely preventive action to avoid a ship strike;
    - keep an appropriate safety distance from cetaceans;
    - broadcast the position of observed cetaceans;
    - report collisions to the designated authorities.

15. The four coastal States have established three thematic working groups dedicated to strengthening the implementation of the APMs, with the aim of ensuring greater consistency and effectiveness across countries and making the measures better known and accessible to stakeholders. The communication group, led by France, is developing a common visual identity and communication package. The sea-land telecommunications group, led by Italy, is examining information to be reported by vessels and transmitted from shore, using familiar channels such as nautical charts, NAVTEX, MRCCs and coastguards. The marine-environment group, led by Spain, is compiling information on cetacean presence, seasonal movements, species sensitivity and human pressures.

b) *Yachting sector engagement beyond the scope of the APMs*

16. Representatives from the yachting sector expressed their willingness to contribute to reducing the sector's impacts on cetaceans, while noting that a significant proportion of the pleasure craft and yacht fleet falls outside the scope

of the APMs, which apply to commercial vessels and pleasure yachts of 300 gross tonnage and above, corresponding approximately to yachts of 35 metres in length.

c) Preliminary evidence on the effectiveness of speed reduction measures

17. According to a vessel traffic analysis, commissioned by OceanCare to the company Quiet-Oceans, based on AIS data collected between 2023 and 2024, recreational boats and yachts travelled at speeds considered safer for cetaceans, namely 10 knots or less, for just over 50% of the time. However, approximately 15% of the distance travelled was covered at speeds above 15 knots, and almost 10% at speeds above 20 knots. The analysis also indicated a slight decrease in the distance travelled at lower speeds in 2024, together with a slight increase in the distance travelled at speeds above 20 knots.

18. The comparison between 2023 and 2024 did not identify significant overall change in vessel speed patterns in the region following the PSSA designation.

19. The study also confirmed that, while merchant vessel and fishing vessel traffic remained relatively constant throughout 2024, the presence of pleasure yachts was significantly higher between May and September, peaking in August at approximately 12,000 vessels constituting the largest category of vessels by number in the PSSA. Within the Pelagos Sanctuary, recreational traffic peaked at approximately 6,000 vessels in July and August

IV. PERSPECTIVES FROM THE YACHTING AND PLEASURE BOATING SECTOR

a) Design and performance

20. Yachting representatives described a market shift from speed towards efficiency, comfort, quietness and longer periods spent on board. Lorenzo Pollicardo, representing the Superyacht Builders Association (SYBAss), explained that this evolution can support the objectives of the PSSA, particularly for new displacement yachts designed for lower operating speeds. Nathalie Quévert presented the Superyacht Eco Association (SEA) Index approach, which considers greenhouse gas emissions associated with both propulsion and onboard energy use. She highlighted that vessel speed is an important operational parameter, but that the broader environmental performance of a yacht also depends on its design, propulsion system and operational profile.

b) Planning and operation

21. Alongside changes in yacht design, yachting representatives emphasised the importance of improving operational practices to reduce the sector's environmental impact. Lorenzo Pollicardo indicated that, for many yachts, operating at lower speeds may also contribute to reducing underwater radiated noise, noting that the relationship between speed and underwater noise may differ between yachts and commercial vessels, particularly with regard to propeller cavitation.Vienna Eleuteri, representing the Water Revolution Foundation (WRF), stressed the importance of ensuring whale-safe navigation practices by integrating ecological information into decision-making processes before departure, particularly during route planning and the development of charter programmes. She also emphasised the need to communicate this information effectively to captains, crews, marina, agents, and other stakeholders across the sector.

c) Shared approach

22. The discussions highlighted broad support for disseminating ecological information and whale-safe navigation practices across the sector, as well as for exploring mechanisms to recognise voluntary efforts. To this end, Vienna

Eleuteri proposed developing bridge-ready guidance and common messaging for mariners, marinas, and agents. Likewise, Lorenzo Pollicardo explained that the development of best practices and incentive schemes, such as those implemented by the Vancouver Port Authority to reduce underwater radiated noise (URN) and vessel strikes, helped facilitate effective sector-wide education and paved the way for subsequent regulation. The Water Revolution Foundation also emphasised the importance of linking operational data and ecological outcomes to support shared learning and adaptive management, rather than relying solely on an enforcement-based approach.

V. DATA AND TECHNOLOGY

a) Monitoring of vessel traffic

23. To facilitate the monitoring of vessel traffic within the Pelagos Sanctuary and the Northwestern Mediterranean PSSA, the VisiZone module was developed in the NETCCOBAMS platform as part of the ShiPrint project. The module enables users to track AIS-equipped vessels in the area and access statistics on ship traffic over a selected period, including the proportion of vessels travelling above the recommended speed limits. This tool provides a concrete contribution to the monitoring of vessel traffic and speed patterns and can support the longer-term assessment of the implementation of the APMs.

b) Exchanges of information

24. To strengthen the sea/land communication to improve the monitoring and mitigation of vessel strike risks, participants highlighted the need to establish common procedures for sighting and collision reports and the transmission of PSSA information through nautical charts, NAVTEX, MRCCs, coastguards, marinas, agents and digital navigation systems. Reporting should be simple enough to be used routinely and should support both immediate awareness and longer-term knowledge.

c) Technological support

25. Scientific and governmental representatives highlighted that detection systems, passive acoustic monitoring, reporting networks and real-time alerts can improve situational awareness and support bridge teams. These tools can also contribute to improving knowledge of whale presence and identifying areas of higher risk.

26. However, technology cannot guarantee timely detection of animals that are submerged, difficult to observe or surfacing close to a fast-moving vessel. It should therefore complement, not replace, precautionary speed reduction, effective lookout and responsible voyage planning.

VI. KEY RECOMMENDATIONS ARISING FROM THE PRESENTATIONS

1) **Integrate whale-safe navigation early**. PSSA information and whale-safe practices should be considered early in the preparation of charter programmes and routes, giving all stakeholders the opportunity to incorporate environmental constraints into operational decisions rather than addressing them only once the yacht enters the area.

2) **Use one operational language**. The yachting sector would benefit from concise and consistent instructions that can be used by owners, managers, captains, bridge teams, agents and marinas. Guidance should translate scientific and regulatory information into practical bridge-ready procedures, including expected speeds, lookout arrangements, reporting protocols and the action to take when cetaceans are observed.

3) **Make responsible practice routine.** Whale-safe navigation should be presented as part of normal yacht operation, not as an additional environmental requirement. Awareness and training should be embedded in crew briefings,

management procedures, pre-arrival information, professional training and communication with owners and charter guests. Industry associations, boat shows, yacht clubs and marinas can play a central role in disseminating these practices.

4) **Demonstrate voluntary implementation**. The yachting sector should take a leading role in showing that voluntary measures can produce measurable results. Operators and industry organisations could promote speed reduction recommendation to 10-to-13-knot, encourage precautionary operation at 10 knots in higher-risk situations, document operational uptake and share relevant data. Demonstrated compliance would help build experience, identify practical constraints and inform any future regulatory framework.

5) **Recognise performance and innovation**. Voluntary implementation should be supported by credible recognition mechanisms. These could include whale-safe guidance or recognition, environmental notations, and acknowledgement by ports or marinas of yachts that demonstrate responsible operational behaviour. Recognition should take account of both navigation practices and relevant technologies, while avoiding systems that reward equipment without evidence of its effective use.

6) **Assess the yacht's overall environmental performance**. Speed reduction is essential for lowering collision risk, but wider environmental performance should also be considered. The sector should continue to assess propulsion efficiency, onboard power generation, including the energy required for accommodation and other onboard services , energy intensity, greenhouse gas and air pollutants emissions and underwater radiated noise through transparent and independently verified approaches. This would complement whale-safe navigation and support broader improvements in yacht design and operation.

7) **Support appropriate technology.** Detection systems, passive acoustic monitoring, real-time information, batteries, efficient propulsion and other onboard technologies can support safer and quieter operation. Public authorities and recognition frameworks should provide sufficient clarity for useful technologies and verified technical solutions to be taken into account. Technology should nevertheless support, not replace, precautionary speed, effective lookout and responsible voyage planning.

8) **Create incentives for good practice.** Ports, marinas, class societies and industry bodies could explore reduced fees, preferred recognition, environmental notations or other benefits for yachts that demonstrate responsible navigation and environmental performance. Incentives should be adapted to the motivations of yacht owners and charterers, for whom credible recognition may be more relevant than a limited financial reward.

9) **Connect operations with evidence**. Operational and ecological information should be used as a learning tool. The sector should contribute, where possible, to sighting and collision reporting, monitoring of speed patterns and evaluation of the practical application of the APMs.

10) **Continue sector dialogue**. The proposed extended session at a future Genoa International Boat Show should be used to review implementation, present updated traffic data, discuss technologies and recognition mechanisms, and agree pilot actions with clear responsibilities. To ensure that future measures are both ecologically effective and operationally feasible, dialogue among stakeholders from the yachting sector, scientists, public authorities and conservation organisations should be continued, notably in other yachting-sector forums such as the Cannes Yachting Festival and the Monaco Yacht Show.

ANNEX I – LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

NAME / CONTACTS
AZAR Aviv *University of Haifa*
AZHARI Ali *Red Sea Authority*
BELLIENI Carla *Università di Genova*
BIANCHI Donatella *Reporter*
BLANCHET Olivier *BNP Paribas*
BORIANI Gloria *Yachting agent*
BOUSSELLAA Wiem *ATUTAX*
BRAVO Carlos *OceanCare*
BRUCKNER Simone *San Lorenzo*
CHISHOLM Suzy *SwissOceanTech*
COLASIMONE Luisa *OceanCare*
COLONNELLO Roberto *Yachting agents*
COLONNELLO Simone *Yachting agents*
COLOTTO Fabio *Scientist*

CORNIQUET Renaud *ACCOBAMS*
DE MARI Emanuele *Yachting agents*
ELEUTERI Vienna *Water Revolution Foundation*
ENTRUP Nicolas *OceanCare*
GAGGERO Tomaso *Università di Genova*
GOULT Rachel *Yacht Association*
GOUNOT Laurine *MIRACETI*
GRAY Mel *Yacht designers and operators*
LAMOUTI Souad *CNRDPA*
MAGLIO Alessio *SINAY*
MORLEY Natasha *NGO*
MOULINS Aurelie *CIMA Research Foundation*
NIBANI Houssine *AGIR*
NOTARBARTOLO DI SCIARA Giuseppe *Founder and Honorary President of the Tethys Research Institute*
PANIGADA Simone *President of the Tethys Research Institute / Chair of the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee*
PETROVA Eva *Royal Institution of Naval Architects*

PIMENTEL Valerie *OceanCare*
POLLICARDO Lorenzo *Sybass*
PUTRINO Rocco *Reporter*
QUÉVERT Nathalie *SEA Index Yacht Club de Monaco*
RAVINDER Bhavya *Financier*
RAZETO Andrea *Yachting agents*
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TIMBERLAKE Jessima *Yacht designer and operators*
TOGO Ertugrul *Yacht operator*
TRUSCOTT Giles *OceanLed*
UNER Emir *Yacht operator*
VIVIANI Michele *Universita di Genova*

VULPIO Antonio *Reporter*
WAGEMAKERS Bob *Yacht designers and operators*
WERNER Leah *Water Revolution Foundation*
XYDIAS Alexandros *OceanCare*

ANNEX II. WEBINAR AGENDA AND INVITATION

