

SeaBOS Endangered Species Strategy

Time-bound goals

1. Put science-based and operational measures in place that, when combined, substantially reduce the risk of harm to endangered elasmobranch (sharks & rays) and seabird species from our own operations by October 2022; and substantially reduce the risk of harm to these species in operations which are part of our supply chains.
2. We will publish, by January 2022, a list of “best practice” measures for limiting harm to endangered elasmobranch and seabird species.
3. By May 2022 we will develop a monitoring and reporting framework for interactions with endangered elasmobranch and seabird species for adoption in October 2022.
4. We will report in October 2023 and October 2025 on progress towards meeting Goal 1 and the rapid action intended to mitigate harm to endangered species whenever identified.
5. Drawing on lessons learned from focusing on elasmobranchs and seabirds in this initial phase of endangered species work, initiate process in October 2023 to expand the scope and focus of the SeaBOS endangered species work, with an aim to eliminate, in a step wise fashion, all negative impacts on endangered species.

Purpose: SeaBOS members are committed to advancing ocean stewardship, including by engaging in sustainable seafood production. Sustainable production can only happen if impacts on endangered species are minimized.

Definition: For the purposes of SeaBOS, we define “Endangered species” as the list of species identified as Vulnerable, Endangered or Critically Endangered by the IUCN, refined as appropriate with more recent or detailed scientific assessments, as well as those species designated as endangered, threatened or protected by relevant governmental or intergovernmental bodies.

Approach: SeaBOS members have committed to increase transparency about their own operations, evaluate if and how endangered species interact with their own operations, determine how negative interactions can be minimized and implement appropriate actions. This strategy aims to improve knowledge and advance transparency, while also ensuring that existing (and emerging) practices aimed at reducing risks to endangered species and their habitats are more widely applied across all aspects of the seafood industry, including fisheries, feeds and aquaculture operations. SeaBOS members working together with scientists will develop and pilot science-based solutions including evaluation of novel technologies that can help monitor the status of endangered species, mitigate negative impacts or incentivize compliance. Leadership will be provided on stewardship initiatives for species and habitats that are experiencing declines in health and coverage. This strategy is based on experiences derived from previous work in Task Force I, and similarly includes a series of iterative and co-designed steps.

Scope: Given the large number of species that are defined as endangered, we will initially focus (2021-2023) on elasmobranchs and seabirds as starting points for action.

Future scope: Recognizing the complexity and diversity of actions and learning required to achieve sustainable seafood production, at least three elements will be of particular focus when advancing the strategy beyond its initial scope in 2023. This expansion involves extending the activities to additional taxonomic groups (e.g., other fish species, mammals, reptiles), engaging in further actions aimed to prevent and reduce overfishing, including through building synergies with other SeaBOS Task Forces, and attention to the conservation and restoration of habitats and ecosystems of crucial importance for endangered species. Individual efforts in these areas are already underway, and will be systematically collected by the science team during the next few years, in order to support future expansion and a comprehensive approach to stewardship.

Why SeaBOS?

The international community has already developed clear international plans of action and management measures on seabirds and elasmobranchs and there are opportunities for SeaBOS companies to support such existing measures. SeaBOS has a unique capacity to accelerate existing means to reduce threats and an initial focus on these two species groups in a first phase (2021-2023) will generate new knowledge and practice, can contribute to mainstreaming existing approaches, and contributes to ocean stewardship. Our initial work with seabirds and elasmobranchs will provide an opportunity to collaboratively learn about best practices with an aim to expand such knowledge and practice also to other species groups.

A stepwise approach to achieve these time-bound goals

1. Scientific assessment and reporting

A range of scientific data sources include information on endangered species, their status, geographical distribution and interaction with seafood production. We will draw on the leading scientific organisations and ensure that information is collected and synthesized in ways that inform the strategic decisions and priorities of SeaBOS members.

2. Internal due diligence and assessment

A questionnaire will be developed for each SeaBOS company to help develop an understanding of potential and existing interactions between endangered species and seafood operations, whether or not the species is retained or discarded, as well as interactions with relevant habitats and ecosystems. This may involve consideration of target species & non-target species interactions, gear or infrastructure involved, or the geographic areas and time of the year at an appropriate resolution. Such identification would start with own operations and progressively also involve activities of supply chains.

3. Inventory of best practices and relevant organizations

Multiple existing policies (internal company policies, codes of conduct related to suppliers) and practices are available for reducing negative impacts on endangered species (e.g. through avoidance, mitigation and reduction of post-release mortality rates). Examples of existing best practice and novel technologies to minimize impacts on endangered species will be compiled and communicated to SeaBOS members. External expert organizations will be identified for potential partnerships.

4. Company revision to codes of conduct, procurement and other policies

Shared learning about problems, best practices and company specific priority areas will ensure that companies are able to engage in relevant activities. Actions may inform revisions of codes of conduct or updating of procurement policies.

5. Co-producing company specific solutions

Not all actions are necessary everywhere and all the time. We will for instance, focus on identifying company-specific areas of risk and opportunities for mitigating impact on endangered species, supported by strengthened monitoring, transparency and traceability, while also recognizing that sustainable management efforts that are transparent are more likely to be viewed as credible by stakeholders.

6. Definition of voluntary actions and associated reporting

This process includes the demonstrable removal of risks to endangered species from supply chains and implementation of existing policies to reduce impacts on endangered species, primarily based on existing best practices in wild capture and aquaculture operations, national legislation and guidelines, conservation organizations, and Regional Fishery Management Organization (RFMO) conservation and management measures (CMMs). This will support translating scientific knowledge and practice that are 'fit for purpose' in fisheries and aquaculture production. An increase in transparency via reporting can help to illustrate how each company is exposed to risks associated with harming endangered species.

7. Innovation in policy, scientific knowledge and practice

SeaBOS members have an ability to influence the existing practice associated with endangered species, but can also play an important part in generating new scientific knowledge, leading restorative stewardship and advocating for better policies – this applies to their individual national context, international organisations in which they are active (e.g. RFMO), certification bodies, and elsewhere.



This strategy was developed by SeaBOS Task Force I, with scientific support from the **Stockholm Resilience Centre** at Stockholm University, the **Beijer Institute of Ecological Economics** and the **Global Economic Dynamics and the Biosphere program** at the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, **University of Birmingham** and the **Stanford Center for Ocean Solutions** and financial support from the **Walton Family Foundation**, the **David and Lucile Packard Foundation**, and the **Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation**.