



Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Scientific Committee of Sustainable Dolphin and Whale Watching project

The Scientific Committee (SC) is a technical body with a key role in the development and revision of the dolphin and whale watching standards. The Scientific Committee collaborates by sending comments and voting on the content of the dolphin and whale watching standards and by giving inputs and suggestions on strategic decision for the development of the projects. An open and democratic exchange of opinions, within an appropriate timeframe for feedback, aims at reaching the widest consensus in all the decisions.

1. Content responsibilities of dolphin and whale watching standards

Dolphin and whale watching standards developed and revised are:

- 1.1 Defined, reviewed and revised by the Friend of the Sea Technical and Scientific Department.
- 1.2 Assessed, verified and approved by the Scientific Committee.
- 1.3 Ratified by the Board of Directors.

2. Decision-making thresholds

In summary, the content of the dolphin and whale watching standard(s) developed or revised by the Technical and Scientific Department is decided as follows:

- 2.1 **First phase:** At the beginning of a consultation period, Scientific Committee members and relevant stakeholders are invited to submit their comments on the standard. (relevant stakeholders are here intended as certified operators, scientific groups, NGOs, etc.). The first phase of the consultation period lasts up to 30 days.
- 2.2 **Second phase:** Based on the comments received, the Technical and Scientific Department can apply changes to the standard. In the case of changes, inputs integrated into the standard shall be clearly identified. In any case, the Technical and Scientific Department is in charge to review the compliance of the changes suggested during the revision process. This second phase lasts up to 14 days.
- 2.3 **Third phase:** At the end of the second phase, the members of the Scientific Committee have up to 30 days to vote on the approval of the standard. Votes can be favourable or not. In the case of non-favourable votes, Scientific Committee members are invited to provide an

World Sustainability Organization S.r.l.

Corso Buenos Aires, 45 – 20124 Milano (MI) – Italy - VAT: IT08630940966

www.worldsustainabilityorganization.org www.friendofthesea.org



argumentation that will be considered by the Technical and Scientific Department and the Board of Directors. The duration of the voting process is variable, since it depends on the participation of the members. The maximum deadline for voting is 30 days. However, once all members of the Technical Committee have voted, the revision process can move forward to the next phase.

- 2.4 Fourth phase:** At the end of the voting process, the Technical and Scientific Department shall count the votes. If a member of the Scientific Committee does not vote, this abstention is considered as a null vote. If a majority vote is favorable, the standard is considered approved. If a majority vote is non-favourable, the standard is considered not approved. In the case of a tie vote, the Technical and Scientific Department shall organize a second ballot with the same rules as the first, except that in this case abstention is considered a favorable vote. The voting process ends when the majority of votes is reached.
- 2.5** The Technical and Scientific Department shall forward the result of the voting process to the Board of Directors, which ratifies the decision made by the Scientific Committee.
- 2.6** After the ratification made by the Board of Directors, the Technical and Scientific Department shall upload the approved standard onto the official website and inform all parties involved, providing instructions on the transition period.
- 2.7** At the end of the revision process, a summary of the process describing how comments have been managed by Friend of the Sea is made publicly available and all parties involved throughout the revision process are informed. All the comments received during the first phase are made publicly available without attribution or identifier.

3. Confidentiality

All comments and votes from the Scientific Committee members are made publicly available on the Friend of the Sea website, in an anonymous way.

4. Composition

Friend of the Sea strives for a diverse and democratic composition, as well as geographically representative. The Scientific Committee shall have from 5 to 11 members. All of them are voluntary, appointed in a personal capacity, serve a 2-year term and can be renamed. In order to ensure a representative balance of interests, the Technical and Scientific Department manages the selection process to include representatives from all continents.



5. How to become a member

- 5.1** Stakeholders interested in becoming members of the SC can apply by sending an updated CV to the following email: quality@friendofthesea.org
- 5.2** The Technical and Scientific Department can approach stakeholders asking for updated CVs for consideration.
- 5.3** All CVs received, spontaneously or upon request, are analysed during the subsequent selection process.
- 5.4** Every two years, the Technical and Scientific Department conducts a selection process in which analyses all the CVs received and elects the SC members of the subsequent term.
- 5.5** The Scientific and Technical Department shall inform all those who have had their CVs analysed about the result of the selection process in writing and make publicly available the names of the elected members at their discretion.

6. Criteria for approval

- 6.1** Applicants shall have bachelor's degree in marine biology, natural science or an equivalent degree.
- 6.2** Applicants shall have a university master or PhD in the field of cetaceans.
- 6.3** SC members must have at least two years of work as a qualified dolphin and whale watching operator or in an area related to the marine biology of cetaceans.
- 6.4** The Technical and Scientific Department elects the SC members based on a range of experiences and skills, respecting the criteria of geographical representation.

7. Participation

- 7.1** At the beginning of a standard revision process, the Technical and Scientific Department notifies the SC members, inviting them to send their comments using a specific file elaborated for the respective revision process.
- 7.2** Outside of a revision process period, SC members can also send comments regarding the standards. In this case, the input will be considered during the subsequent revision process.



8. Other tasks

- 8.1** Inputs, suggestions and feedback on strategic choices of the sustainable dolphin and whale watching project.
- 8.2** Where possible, create contacts with dolphin and whale watching operators and scientific groups for certification purposes.
- 8.3** Proposals for joint projects with Friend of the Sea and other committee members.
- 8.4** Contribute to the creation and revision of dolphin and whale watching related standards.