WHALE HERITAGE SITE
MARINE AREA TENERIFE – LA GOMERA

ACTION PLAN

FIRST REPORT JUNE 2021
Index

Background ................................................................................................................................... 3
Steering Committee ...................................................................................................................... 5
Action Plan .................................................................................................................................... 6
Encouraging Respectful Human-Cetacean Coexistence ............................................................... 7
  1. Elimination of Illegal Whale Watching Activities .............................................................. 8
  2. Promotion of Responsible Touristic Whale Watching and Nature Activities .................. 11
  3. Whale Watching for the Community and Visitors .......................................................... 13
Celebrating Cetaceans.................................................................................................................. 16
  4. Festivals ................................................................................................................................... 16
  5. Cultural Heritage ............................................................................................................. 17
  6. Conservation and Educational Engaging Events ............................................................. 18
Environmental, Social and Economic Sustainability .................................................................. 19
  7. SAC Management Law Improvement ........................................................................... 20
  8. Whale Watching Surveillance Improvement .................................................................. 21
  9. Natural Reserves ............................................................................................................. 21
  10. Reduction of Fishing Pressure ....................................................................................... 22
  11. Sustainability Promotion ............................................................................................... 22
  12. Public Awareness to Marine Wildlife ............................................................................ 23
Research, Education and Awareness ......................................................................................... 24
  13. Long Term Scientific Monitoring for Resident Cetacean Species ............................... 25
  14. Monitoring Whale Watching and Nautical Activities Impacts on Cetaceans.......... 26
  15. Rescue Centre ................................................................................................................ 26
  16. Outreach to Local Communities .................................................................................... 27
Achievements .................................................................................................................................. 29
Next steps ....................................................................................................................................... 31
ANEX 1. List of legal whale watching operators ........................................................................ 32
ANEX 2. List of illegal operators ............................................................................................... 33
Background

The certification of Whale Heritage Site (WHS) for the Marine Area Tenerife – La Gomera was solicited by ACEST, Association for Cetaceans South of Tenerife, through the pertinent application process that lasted two years. On the 27th of January 2021, the certification was accepted by the World Cetacean Alliance (WCA), after an exhaustive evaluation by the International Revision Panel (IRP). According to World Cetacean Alliance, Whale Heritage Sites are defined as follows:

“Established by the World Cetacean Alliance (WCA), Whale Heritage Sites aim to increase the protection and conservation of cetaceans (whales, dolphins and porpoises) and their habitats while contributing to sustainable livelihoods, the arts, science and education. Whale Heritage Site status will be granted to those places around the world where cetaceans are celebrated through art, education, research and cultural events; where sustainable practices and livelihoods are continually improved to ensure the health of cetacean habitats and the long-term economic health of human communities; and where respectful coexistence with cetaceans is supported through law, policy and cooperation.

Whale Heritage Sites (WHS) are high sea or coastal marine areas, and less often freshwater rivers and lakes, where cetaceans live, and their associated land areas. WHS will be identified against criteria that interweave natural and cultural elements and acknowledge critical places that, for reasons of physical and social geography, are sites where people can coexist with cetaceans in an authentic and respectful way.”

The accreditation of Whale Heritage Site involves management strategies that ensures a path towards sustainable human cetacean coexistence in a holistic way. The certification as WHS is evaluated annually by the IRP and it is renewed if certain required actions had been accomplished. The lines of action are defined by the WHS criteria, which falls into four categories:

1. Encouraging respectful Human – Cetacean Coexistence
2. Celebrating cetaceans
3. Environmental, social, and economic sustainability
4. Research, education, and awareness
Each WHS creates its own Steering Committee, which is comprised by local key organizations, governmental and non-governmental represented by competent people with an honest and active trajectory on cetacean conservation related fields.

ACEST, being the legal representant of this accredited WHS, selected and invited a group of local experts to take part into this initiative. They kindly accepted since WHS certification has no personal interest other than: honouring the marine area and the cetaceans inhabiting it; working together to mitigate all possible impacts on cetaceans created by human activity; as well as to raise awareness and involving and benefiting the local community.

The beauty of being a Whale Heritage Site is that brings together experts, authorities, organizations, local communities, visitors, and touristic professionals, to empower together and walk in the same direction towards inspiring advocacy, respect, and joy to celebrate these magnificent animals that nature gifted us with.
Steering Committee

The members of the Whale Heritage Site Marine Area Tenerife – La Gomera Steering Committee were selected from different backgrounds in relation to cetacean conservation, research, education, or nautical activities, to bring together different insights, and different strategic key positions. The members and their representatives are as follows:

- ACEST. Asociación Cetáceos Sur de Tenerife: Kathaysa Ugido (Picarus Sailing Club), Mercedes Reyes (Whale Wise Eco Tours)
- Turismo de Tenerife de Cabildo Tenerife: Aida Cedres, Sara Pompad
- Cabildo de la Gomera: Hector Cabrera, Mª Isabel Almenara
- Asociación Tonina: Dr. Ana Crespo, Dr. Jacobo Marrero
- Universidad de La Laguna: Dr. Natacha Aguilar, Chloe Zyoard
- Especies de Canarias: Felipe Rabina
- Calderones de Canarias: Mirna Piñero
- Baobab Suites & Cuna del Alma: Peter Hoste
- Freelance marine biologist: Dr. Marc Fernández
- Mission Blue: Francis Pérez
- Ventana al mar: Volker Boehlke
- Puertos Deportivos de Tenerife: Tomas Azcárate

PRESIDENTS:

- Mercedes Reyes (ACEST; Whale Wise Eco Tours & Research S.L.U.)
- Mirna Piñero (Calderones de Canarias)
Action Plan

The Action Plan for the Whale Heritage Site Marine Area Tenerife – La Gomera was created considering the following objectives:

- To fulfil the requirements suggested from the International Revision Panel (IRP),
- The needs of the designated area based on their priority by the impact generated or the lack of actions.
- The four areas of action following the criteria for WHS:

The Steering Committee decided that it was appropriate and necessary to create an action plan that not only meets the suggested actions by the IRP, but also goes beyond, reaching other priorities observed for this WHS. The plan includes projects and initiatives considered to help improve different aspects of all four WHS’s criteria, short and long term.

This first Action Plan report defines each action with the following information:

- Brief description.
- Entity or entities developing the action.
- Starting point and expected timeline.

The objective of this Action Plan is to settle the basis for present and future lines of work for this WHS. Full description, implementation strategies, budget and other relevant information will be described further ahead in time, in future reports when required.

The WHS Action Plan is flexible over time, adapting to the priorities of the moment of the designated site. Every year an updated version of the action plan will be included in the Annual Evaluation Report.
The WHS has developed, and seeks to continually improve, a responsible framework managing the coexistence of people and cetaceans.

1.1 Guidelines and/or regulations related to the interactions between humans and cetaceans support international best practice and are appropriate to local context. Guidelines and/or regulations must be developed collaboratively by all the key stakeholders, reviewed regularly, and clearly communicated to relevant audiences.

1.2 Guidelines and/or regulations are monitored by a minimum of two authorities, one of which can be advisory, but the other should be a responsible government body authorised to take effective action. There should be a clear process for any breaches including consequences for offenders.

1.3 Regular training takes place for skippers, crew, guides, onshore staff, and other stakeholders to ensure ownership and maintenance of responsible standards for interactions.

1.4 A permit system exists that manages and limits licences for cetacean interactions according to the best available local research and includes regular assessment and reapplication.

1.5 Mechanisms are in place to encourage ongoing reduction of any environmental impacts associated with watching cetaceans.
1. **Elimination of Illegal Whale Watching Activities**

**Description**

To reduce the number of boats doing commercial whale watching in the designated area, with especial focus and effort to eliminate unlicensed whale watching operators, as well as mitigating bad whale watching practices from: licensed and non-licensed whale watching operators.

1.1 To create a list of authorized whale watching operators.

1.1.1. This list will contain all boats and companies that possess both authorizations: The one issued by the Ministry of ecological transition; and the blue boat flag licenced by the Tourism Department of the Regional Government.

1.1.2. The list will be updated every time these government bodies make any change to their respective published lists.

1.1.3. The list will be published and distributed among all collaborating partners, social media, web pages, and all available media including QR codes visible in key locations such as harbours and marinas where the activity takes place. The main objective is that the list reaches the public in specific the whale watching tourists.

1.2 To reach out to all companies that offer other nautical activities such as:

- jet ski rentals.
- kayaks and SUP.
- parascending.
- boat rentals.
- sport fishing.
- sailing charters and similar.
The contact protocol will be a cordial email initially and then personal meetings, to inform about the importance of not approaching the cetaceans, and the consequences of doing so. This initiative also involves providing solutions and alternatives that they could implement.

1.3 Outreach for private boaters, to educate about the code of conduct, regulations and prohibitions established by the Spanish Cetacean Protection Law. This can be done in the form of flyers (physical and digital); workshops; talks; and person to person education using prepared volunteers in situ at the marinas.

1.4 Creation of an attractive and easy to read informative flyer that resumes the code of conduct into simple diagrams and instructions. This flyer will be translated into the most common languages observed for the tourists in Tenerife and La Gomera (i.e., English, German, French, Russian). It will be provided in printed and in digital format, and it will be distributed greatly among all possible ways. (Turismo de Tenerife y La Gomera, Acest)

1.5 To propose to the pertinent governmental departments, the implementation of a limited number of commercial whale watching boats for the island of La Gomera.

1.6 To create a list of observed illegal whale watching operators, to pass on to the relevant authorities and enforcement bodies.

1.7 To collect evidence of illegal whale watching activities, bad practices, and any other anthropogenic impacts on marine wildlife, such as entanglements on derelict fishing gear and collisions with boats.

1.8 To engage all relevant authorities and enforcement bodies to keep acting against all illegal activities and bad practices around cetaceans, by means of maintaining usual communication and collaboration.
1.9 To help coordinate actions from the different public administrations that have competence of different lines of actions.

Implementation

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Timeline

Start point:

- Actions proposed in sections: 1.1 ; 1.6 ; 1.7 ; 1.8 ; 1.9 have already started and are being implemented. Please check section: ACHIVEMENTS.
- Actions 1.2 ; 1.4 ; 1.5 before end of 2021
- Action 1.3, year 2022

Development period:

The initiatives described for all section 1. Commercial Whale Watching and Nautical Activities, are crucial for achieving that the WHS Marine Area Tenerife – La Gomera becomes a responsible and sustainable whale watching hot spot worldwide. Therefore, these initiatives are proposed to be developed indefinitely, as long as needed, as long as it takes for human activities to coexists with cetaceans in a balanced way.

End time:

No end time, unless all whale watching activity within the WHS designated area are carried out in a responsible and sustainable way.
2. Promotion of Responsible Touristic Whale Watching and Nature Activities

This section refers to initiatives that improve the quality of whale watching practices within the designated WHS area.

2.1 Talks, workshops, or webinars for professional touristic guides about the importance and added value of sustainable touristic practices, with emphasis on the marine environment, biodiversity, biology, and conservation.

2.2 Theoretical and practical training for professional skippers about the code of conduct, including tips and techniques for responsible whale watching encounters, such as cetacean approach manoeuvres; suggested best ways for different species-specific interactions; benefits for both the animals and visitors of good whale watching practices.

2.3 Official training course of: “Formation of Interpreter of the Marine Environment” in collaboration with the Canarian Government. Second edition 2021. This course is mandatory by law to work as a guide on an authorized whale watching boat. This course was stopped during several years, but started in 2018 with a first edition, and due to the pandemic, it stopped. This initiative is simply to engage the return of the course.

2.4 To support and promote “Citizen Science”, for cetacean and marine life related projects. This action includes promoting three existing initiatives that engage the public to participate in scientific data collection:

- Red Promar: Is a project form the Canarian Government that through an app, the public can upload pictures of marine wildlife with data for date and position of the encounter. Then a biologist technician from the government identifies the specie for you. The app shows a map for every species with the name of the people that had the sighting, and the location on the map.

- Cetacean Sightings App: Is an app developed by University of La Laguna, where the public can upload the data for cetacean encounters, creating a record.
- Whale Wise Eco Tours: Is a responsible and sustainable whale watching operator that blends whale watching tours with cetacean research and conservation, allowing their clients to understand and participate with the data collection.

2.5 To put into the public domain the latest results of cetacean scientific studies carried out by the local main research groups: Asociación Tonina and La Laguna University. The outreach can be done by giving the important interesting information to the whale watching operators to integrate in their interpretive talks in their tour. Also, the organization of webinars or workshops, and social media.

Implementation

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Timeline

Start point:

- Actions: 2.1 ; 2.2 year 2022
- Action: 2.3 estimated year 2021
- Actions: 2.4 ; 2.5 Already implemented previous to WHS certification, however effort to spread these initiates and link them to WHS actions, estimated year 2022

Development period: The initiatives described for all section 2. Promotion of Responsible Touristic Whale Watching and Natura Activities, are important actions engaging the professional
sector, and the local community within the WHS Marine Area Tenerife – La Gomera to take active action towards becoming a responsible and sustainable whale watching hot spot worldwide. Therefore, these initiatives are proposed to be developed indefinitely, as long as it takes for human activities to coexist with cetaceans in a balanced way.

End time: No end time, unless all whale watching activity within the WHS designated area are carried out in a responsible and sustainable way. Some of the initiatives will last a short period of time, i.e., webinars, courses. However, it will be expected that they are carried out repeatedly at least once a year.

3. Whale Watching for the Community and Visitors

The creation of a Cetacean Interpretation (and Marine Wildlife Rescue*) Centre with information and educational material about cetacean of the Whale Heritage Site Marine Area Tenerife – La Gomera, with attractive information about whale and dolphin biodiversity, biology, conservation, responsible whale watching, plus a facility for wildlife rescue that the Canarian Government Veterinarians and technicians can use.

The interpretation centre will be privately funded by Baobab Suites and Cuna del Alma, who kindly offered to donate the use and management to the WHS Steering Committee. The location is in the village within the WHS designated area, called El Puertito Armeñime, at section of a historical warehouse. (See satellite picture below)
The project of Cuna del Alma is a new concept of sustainable holiday homes. The project is under construction, and it covers a long land plot, including waterfront land.
The actions for this Interpretation centre consist of gathering and/or creating the following:

- Professional pictures for a Photo Show
- Exposition material like bones, skulls, baleen, teeth and similar
- Educational material of cetacean biology, behaviour, and communication.
- Informative material about responsible whale watching.
- Important information and facts about conservation status.

Implementation

The space is kindly lent by Cuna del Alma & Baobab Suites. The use and content will be developed by WHS Steering Committee.

Timeline

Start point: The planification and information gathering by year 2022

Development period: The opening estimated date is by year 2023

End time: No end time defined.

*Description of the Wildlife Rescue centre, see action 15 of the present Action Plan.
The WHS celebrates the close cultural association between cetaceans and people.

2.1 *Wild cetaceans are reflected in culture through historical or contemporary practices that harness a greater appreciation for living cetaceans in their natural habitats.*

2.2 *Cetacean-related festivals, ceremonies, meetings, or other events that encourage a sense of pride, heritage, history, sustainability, and legacy are held annually.*

2.3 *Cetacean-related works of art are created, including in music, dance, and theatre; the visual arts, and in literature, from both written and spoken traditions.*

4. **Festivals**

Over the last three decades there has been a lot of festivals related to celebrating marine wildlife, many of them paying special attention to cetaceans. Unfortunately, some of these festivals have stopped before the pandemic, and others after the pandemic due to social gathering restrictions. This actions simply implies to engage for the restart of some of these festivals, and to contact the pertinent organizers to dedicate some space or events for the WHS, or cetaceans and responsible whale watching.
As a starting point this action focuses on three festivals because of their popularity or their interest on cetacean themes. These festivals are: Dolphinity; Arona SOS Atlántico; & Boreal.

**Implementation**

**WHS Steering Committee**

**Timeline**

Start point: Once the restrictions from COVID19 prevention are lifted and the festivals restart

Development period: During the festivals, dates not defined yet

End time: No end time defined.

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**5. Cultural Heritage**

This action was suggested by the IRP, and consists of encouraging a degree or Masters student to do a final thesis about “Historical and Modern Human and Cetacean Coexistence in the Canary Islands”. The objective is to further research this topic for a deeper understanding of links and connections between humans and cetaceans over time in the Canary Islands.

The task is to encourage any university professor to support such research for one of the students. There are two Universities: Universidad de La Laguna, and Universidad de las Palmas de Gran Canaria.

**Implementation**

Engaging by WHS Steering Committee, and execution by University of La Laguna and/or University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria

**Timeline**

Start point: The engaging has started (see achievements in this report). Execution has not started, estimated by 2022.

Development period: Not yet defined

End time: No end time defined.
6. Conservation and Educational Engaging Events

To organize engaging and participative events to educate the public about marine life and conservation. The proposal is to create an event named “Week of the Sea” in both islands, with among other activities, talks about biodiversity, and sustainable activities on the coast and sea. The intent is to make a highly educational event that is fun for the public, especially for young public.

Implementation

La Gomera: Turismo de La Gomera; Ventana al Mar.

Tenerife: Turismo de Tenerife; ACEST,

Timeline

Start point: Estimated by end of summer 2021.

Development period: one week

End time: one week after the start.
Environmental, Social and Economic Sustainability

The WHS seeks to achieve an environmentally, socially and economically sustainable balance between the natural environment, the expectations of visitors, the needs of the local community and the businesses that operate there. This balance is best achieved through engaging stakeholder representatives from government, the private sector, the local community and other relevant organisations, to collaborate on embedding effective policies and practices into the sustainable management of the Whale Heritage Site and the wider tourism industry in the destination.

3.1 Economic sustainability - sustainable livelihoods are created, generating employment and financial benefits, to provide a clear demonstration of the economic value of protecting cetaceans. This can be achieved directly (through whale-watching, tour guiding, research and conservation, etc.) and indirectly (through employment in cetacean tourism related services, such as arts festivals, exhibitions and other cultural events) but should include a balance of jobs (i.e., should ideally not be overly dominated by low paid, informal work).

3.2 Social Sustainability - local communities are recognised as key WHS stakeholders by: 3.2.1 Being given the opportunity to participate in decision-making at key stages.

3.2.2 Informed via press, social media or other means, about the Whale Heritage Site Candidacy and the rationale behind it.

3.2.3 Involved in preparing and maintaining the site for WHS status.
3.2.4 Engaged in educational and community outreach events that promote the WHS and the reasons for its existence.

3.3 **Environmental sustainability** - the marine and terrestrial ecosystems within the WHS must be maintained and preferably enhanced to support a thriving population of wild cetaceans.

3.3.1 Threats relevant to the primary cetacean habitat should be identified and an action plan developed to address those impacts within the control of local stakeholders.

3.3.2 A range of measures to enhance general environmental sustainability should be undertaken.

3.4 **Sustainable Destination Management** - to support achievement of all the above criteria, ensure continuous improvement and maintain the long-term sustainability of the WHS, those responsible for the management of tourism in the location should ensure that there is an active and ongoing process to improve sustainability using recognised tools.

7. **SAC Management Law Improvement**

This action is in hand of the pertinent governmental bodies, who in 2019 presented a draft for an improved SAC Teno- Rasca Management Law. This draft had specific measures for whale watching activities, boat speed limit, jet sky delimited area, and fishing regulations. However, this law has not been implemented.

This initiative implies joining forces with other non-profit organizations such as El Corridor Biológico Mundial and Hope Spot from Mission Blue, to keep up the pressure through letters, publishing articles, and other possible tools until this actualization of the human activity and uses of the SAC is approved and implemented.

**Implementation**

By ACEST, WHS Steering Committee, and other non-profit partners.

**Timeline**

Start point: This present year 2021

Development period: different methods will be used regularly until needed

End time: Not defined yet, until goal is achieved.
8. **Whale Watching Surveillance Improvement**

This initiative consists of persuading and promoting the implementation of whale watching surveillance in La Gomera island, and secondly the improvement of that of carried out in Tenerife. The body in charge of the surveillance patrol is the Canarian Government, who possess two vessels for it, but they are slow and inefficient to collect evidence on illegal boats. It is necessary to reflect the importance of improvements such as smaller zodiac type vessels, and more personnel.

**Implementation**

Engaging and petitions by ACEST, WHS Steering Committee, and other non-profit partners, and supporters.

Implementation by Canarian Government.

**Timeline**

Start point: This present year 2021

Development period: not defined, until needed.

End time: Not defined yet, until goal is achieved.

9. **Natural Reserves**

The aim is to achieve that the WHS Marine Area Tenerife – La Gomera becomes a Whole Natural Reserve, with all the marine wildlife and ecosystems preserved intact. This project was first proposed by Mission Blue through the declared Hope Spot for the same designated area as for WHS.

This initiative implies joining forces with other non-profit organizations such as El Corridor Biológico Mundial and Hope Spot from Mission Blue, to keep up the pressure through letters, publishing articles, and other possible tools until this conservation status is achieved.

**Implementation**

By ACEST, WHS Steering Committee, and other non-profit partners.

**Timeline**

Start point: This present year 2021
10. Reduction of Fishing Pressure

As an alternative to action 9, the Steering Committee will engage the relevant governmental bodies to increase the fishing restrictions within the WHS designated area, especially to eliminate the most aggressive fishing techniques.

Implementation

By ACEST, WHS Steering Committee, and other non-profit partners.

Timeline

Start point: This present year 2021
Development period: different methods will be used regularly until needed
End time: Not defined yet, until goal is achieved

11. Sustainability Promotion

To promote sustainability in all human – marine environment interactions within the WHS. Every event, festival, initiative, and project presented in this document will always support this action since sustainability is no longer a philosophy, but a necessity.

Implementation

Implemented by all WHS Steering Committee members, WHS partners and supporters.

Timeline

Start point: This present year 2021
Development period: indefinitely
End time: No end time.
12. Public Awareness to Marine Wildlife

This project pretends to reach young public, children, and teenagers in order to change their perspective towards the sea and all living creatures within it. There is a lot of sport fishing always happening at the coast, it is a traditional hobby among many canarian families. We want to get funding to create an engaging and fun project where: older children and teenagers change the fishing rod for snorkelling gear, and start enjoying the beauty of living animals, and not dead at the hook. For the youngest children, it would be safer to enjoy marine life in rockpools. The idea is to change the concept in their minds, and they start to adopt a more sustainable relationship with the marine environment.

This project needs funding since implies the use of field equipment and personnel as monitors, as well as educational material such as handbooks and short animated videos.

Implementation

Implemented by ACEST, WHS Steering Committee, Felipe Ravina, Turismo Tenerife, Canarian Government.

Timeline

Start point: Not defined yet, depends on funding opportunities

Development period: not defined yet.

End time: not defined yet.
Research, Education and Awareness

The WHS recipient has developed, and seeks to continually improve, its commitment towards research, education and awareness.

4.1 Companies and organisations involved with cetacean interactions incorporate conservation-directed science and research programmes.

4.2 Conservation-based cetacean research and policy is showcased within the site.

4.3 Educational programmes that focus on cetaceans are delivered to local communities.

4.4 Local sustainability initiatives benefitting the marine environment are showcased.
**13. Long Term Scientific Monitoring for Resident Cetacean Species**

Scientific data over long periods of time is the best tool to further understand the natural processed and the needs of each ecosystem and species. Furthermore, it provides the power and evidence to fight against avaricious projects with high impacts on the habitats and their species.

There has been a lot of scientific studies related to cetaceans off Tenerife and La Gomera, many of them attempting to monitor the species over time. However, there are important gaps in time in between, mainly due to the sporadic way of funding from the Government, and the lack of cooperation among different research groups.

The WHS Steering Committee aims for two goals:

- To create a self-sufficient private way of funding, that would ensure a paid research group to do the task.
- To pass on the funding within a research group that are part of the Steering Committee, so that there is constant cooperation and communication.

There are already fully detailed scientific project proposals on the table regarding long term monitoring of the animals. The difficulty relays on obtaining funding. Several ideas have been discussed, but there is no clear path yet. The Steering Committee will continue to research and discuss about this action, and the detail will be presented to the IRP when ready

**Implementation**

The action of looking for funding will be implemented by all WHS Steering Committee members, since we all agree that is needed and will work together for it.

The development of the scientific studies will be carried out by a local research group.

**Timeline**

Start point: already in the planning

Development period: indefinitely

End time: No end time.
14. Monitoring Whale Watching and Nautical Activities Impacts on Cetaceans

In addition to action 13, constant monitoring the impacts of whale watching and other nautical activities on cetaceans is of vital importance for cetacean welfare, and for engaging the authorities and governments to reinforce and improve the management, regulations, and law in relation to these activities, and cetacean protection.

This action could be easily incorporated into action 13. if the latest is achieved. Otherwise, alternative resources should be use, such as the use whale watching boats as opportunistic platforms to collect data, with previous training of the personnel on board.

15. Rescue Centre

It is planned to create a wildlife rescue centre next to the Interpretation centre mentioned in action 3. of this action plan. There are some species that are protected by law and can only be managed and handled by the government professionals or approved non-profits. This means that the WHS can only arrange and provide the workspace of the facility. All rescue projects and protocols must be design and implemented by the government veterinarian groups.

In Tenerife, the rescue facility is located at the north of the island, in La Laguna, over 70 kms away of the designated area, and far from the main touristic areas. The current rescue protocol consists of the veterinarians coming to the south of the island (approximately 1 hour by car) to pick up the injured animal such as turtles, driving all the way back, and in cases with a positive outcome, the animals are brought back to the south to their release. Sometimes this is too much stress, and too long drive for injured animals. The aim of the rescue centre is to provide an alternative workspace on the south, so that injured animals can be assisted faster, and can be released after at the beach located only 50 meters from the rescue centre.

Implementation

The space will be kindly lent by Cuna del Alma & Baobab Suites.

Timeline

Start point: Estimated 2023
Development period: indefinitely
End time: No end time
16. Outreach to Local Communities

According to WHS criteria, it is important to bring together local community and cetaceans. In order to establish that connection, the Steering Committee believes that the chances of success would increase if the community were involved from a young age, hence it is proposed an outreach project to bring cetaceans into the schools, not literally, but in the following forms:

16.1. Creating handbooks designed for the different ages. Then they can be electronically distributed for the teachers to incorporate into their classes. Or if funding is found, bring a cetacean expert into the schools to give presentations. As a last resource, members of the committee would volunteer for this.

16.2. Cetacean drawing contest among schools and high schools with donated prices of whale watching tours.

16.3. To engage the Regional Government Education Department to incorporate cetaceans and local marine wildlife into their lectures.

16.4. To present this project to the local government in case they like it and want to take over with more resources.

16.5. To create a child friendly local cetacean documentary
Implementation

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Timeline

Start point: year 2022

Development period: not defined, but with a trial period of 1 year.

End time: Not defined
Achievements

ACEST, together with the Steering Committee have initiated some of the actions presented in this Action Plan. These are the following:

Illegal whale watching operators

I. Regarding the actions proposed to eliminate illegal whale watching boats, all actions in section 1.1 have been initiated.

   1.1. To create a list of authorized whale watching operators.

   1.1.1 This list will contain all boats and companies that possess both authorizations: The one issued by the Ministry of ecological transition; and the blue boat flag licenced by the Tourism Department of the Regional Government.

   1.1.2 The list will be updated every time these government bodies make any change to their respective published lists.

   1.1.3. The list will be published and distributed among all collaborating partners, social media, web pages, and all available media including QR codes visible in key locations such as harbours and marinas where the activity takes place. The main objective is that the list reaches the public in specific the whale watching tourists.

A list of authorized whale watching boats was created in an easy to follow format, hence directed to all kind of public. It was designed in a format and size that are social media friendly to help its distribution, and in English and Spanish versions. It was included a system based on coloured stars to reflect the companies that are: members of ACEST; members of the sustainability chart; and companies that collaborate with the WHS initiatives. (ANEX 1)

The list is up to date to June 2021. The veracity was checked carefully based on the official lists. The Canarian Government, Tourism Department, have their list of blue boat authorized vessels on their webpage. On the other hand, the Ministry of Ecological Transition, who issues the other required licence, had an out-of-date list from September 2019. ACEST and Turismo de Tenerife contacted this Ministry to obtain updated information and to offer collaboration. The Ministry agreed and they will, from now on, publish their updated list on their webpage, hence ensuring that the list created for the WHS will have updated information.
The distribution of the list has started successfully, and it is being published by:

- ACEST and All ACEST members in their social media, webpages and directly to potential clients that ask for whale watching information
- Tenerife Tourism, in their webpage and engaging its distribution among major tourism related organizations:
  - ASHOTEL (Hotel Association, with 240 local hotels as members)
  - APIT (Association of Touristic Guides)
  - ACTIVA CANARIAS (Association of Stakeholders of Active Tourism)
  - Recreational Marinas of Tenerife.
  - RED INFOTEN (Touristic Information Centres of Tenerife)
  - PARTNERS of Tenerife Tourism
- La Gomera Council, Tourism and Environment departments
- Enforcement bodies (Guardia Civil) in their official Newsletter.

II. Within the same section 1. The actions 1.6 to 1.9 are also initiated and being implemented.

- 1.6 To create a list of observed illegal whale watching operators, to pass on to the relevant authorities and enforcement bodies.
- 1.7 To collect evidence of illegal whale watching activities, bad practices, and any other anthropogenic impacts on marine wildlife, such us entanglements on derelict fishing gear and collisions with boats.
- 1.8 To engage all relevant authorities and enforcement bodies to keep acting against all illegal activities and bad practices around cetaceans, by means of maintaining usual communication and collaboration.
- 1.9 To help coordinate actions from the different public administrations that have competence of different lines of actions.

ACEST has created an extra official list of illegal whale watching operators, based on data obtained over time on a daily basis by ACEST’s members. The nature of whale watching makes it difficult for the authorities to spot all illegal activity happening out at any time and location. However, Boats from ACEST’s members are constantly out there spotting illegal operators. This list will not be published into the public domain, but it has been passed on to enforcement bodies and the government, so that they have updated information and they can take the pertinent legal actions. (ANEX 2)
Cultural Heritage

This action was suggested by the IRP, and consists of encouraging a degree or Masters student to do a final thesis about "Historical and Modern Human and Cetacean Coexistence in the Canary Islands". The objective is to further research this topic for a deeper understanding of links and connections between humans and cetaceans over time in the Canary Islands.

The task is to encourage any university professor to support such research for one of the students. There are two Universities: Universidad de La Laguna, and Universidad de las Palmas de Gran Canaria.

An initial step of contacting the university to be referred to relevant departments and professors has been carried out. So far this attempt for a first contact has been sent to:

- University of La Laguna:
  - Department of Biology
  - Department of Anthropology
  - Department of Tourism

Next steps

The next steps are:

- To keep on with the implementation of actions proposed for this year 2021
- To carry on with the planning for actions proposed for 2022 and onwards
- To prepare the annual report at the end of this year, with updated information on the actions accomplished from June 2021 to December 2021.
# ANEX 1. List of legal whale watching operators

## TENERIFE

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## LEGEND
- SUPPORTERS AND PROJECT COLLABORATORS OF WHALE HERITAGE SITE
- MEMBERS OF ACES, ASSOCIATION OF CETACEANS SOUTH OF TENERIFE
- MEMBERS OF THE SUSTAINABILITY CHARTER BY TENERIFE TOURISM
## ANEX 2. List of illegal operators

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Notes: (add further notes as necessary)