

GRAY WHALE

URGENT ACTION ALERT

COALITION ON A ROLL

PROTESTS ARE COMING FROM ALL AROUND THE WORLD AS PEOPLE READ ABOUT THE PLIGHT OF THE MAJESTIC GRAY WHALE.

As April 23 looms closer, the date when the Coalition believes President Obama signs off or not on the now notorious draft agreement drawn up by a Support Group of countries within the International Whaling Commission (IWC). The US, along with Japan, New Zealand, Australia, South Korea, the United Kingdom and others have come up with a plan which will see commercial whaling recommence. The California Gray Whale is at major risk under the quotas for Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling, as National Marine & Fisheries (NMFS) has already recommended a quota of 140 whales a year for the next 10 years.

ACTION IT'S VITALLY IMPORTANT WE NOW FOCUS ON GETTING A PROTEST DIRECTLY TO THE WHITE HOUSE.

Environmental campaigns can become very complicated because of the towers of Babel which governments surround themselves with these days. And democratic protest is becoming an equally difficult wall to climb. Senators don't like protests coming from anyone but their constituency. It's not possible to speak to anyone in most political offices these days, just the receptionist if you're lucky.

So let's deluge the White House with emails. Politely and respectfully request that President Obama declines to sign off on the IWC Support Group Draft Agreement.

ACTION WHITE HOUSE – A FLOOD OF EMAILS PLEASE. Go to: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/contact>

Fill in the short form, which also gives the option of writing a decent message. Ask the President to ensure there's a moratorium on any quota for the California Gray Whale. A moratorium is an entirely reasonable suggestion and would allow time for scientists to properly evaluate the real status of the population.

If the draft agreement is signed off by Pres. Obama, the ten year quota for Gray Whales will be very difficult to change. Tell the President that the California economy needs the tourism dollars. Remind him that the Gray Whales are the state marine mammal symbol of California.

Ask him about our moral and spiritual responsibilities to the whale nations.

Please also keep sending emails to Senator Barbara Boxer's office at: - lynn_Abramson@boxer.senate.gov

HOMERO ARIDJIS



The Coalition is honoured to have the support of Mexico's most famous poet and more recently, their Ambassador to the United Nations Environment Program. Homero and his wife Betty founded the Group of 100 and fought the good fight to stop Mitsubishi building a massive salt mine in San Ignacio Laguna

Homero's beautiful poem, the Eye of the Whale, is on the Coalition website under the poetry link. With his unique and exquisite understanding of the Gray whales, Homero evokes all the magic, mysticism and spirituality of this, the most ancient of all baleen whales alive today.

ABORIGINAL SUBSISTENCE WHALING - THE ISSUES

The Coalition believes current indications of major problems for Gray Whales such as low cow/calf counts for the fourth year in a row; growing evidence of skinny whales; changes in migration route; no proper population estimates since 2001/2 should impose a responsibility on the US IWC delegation (mostly National Marine & Fisheries Scientists) to request a moratorium on any Gray whale quota at the forthcoming IWC meeting in June.

As things stand, if Pres. Obama signs off on the draft agreement, the US IWC delegation will be pushing for a 10 year quota of 140 Gray whales annually for the people of Chukotka, in the Russian Federation.

This quota is separate from any commercial quota and is known at the IWC as Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling (ASW). Many of you may be concerned that by not allowing a quota on

Gray Whales, the people of Chukotka, may go hungry. So the Gray Whale raises questions which may well become the Zen Koan's of our time.

Does need have priority over sustainability? Gray whale meat is not very pleasant as the whales are bottom feeders. At least 10% of gray whales hunted by the Chukotkan people stink like medical waste and cannot be eaten by humans or dogs. Up

until a few years ago, the entire quota was being fed to fox farms, not humans. A practice which we believe may still be continuing under cloaks of corruption and deceit. The people of Chukotka also have access to very large herds of reindeers, and other food sources.

There are no environmental protection laws in this part of the world. There's no money in the Russian economy to police any whaling in Chukotka, and nothing is done about the appalling levels of pollution which spew from Siberian rivers into the coastal seas.

At past meetings of the IWC, evidence of the cruelty involved in the Russian kill was shocking.

Gray whales were sometimes chased for hours and hours with dozens of bullets fired into their bodies.

The kill has been female biased with two females for every male slaughtered, a bias which may well be influencing a male dominated population. In the major population crash of 1999/2000 which took out around one third of the population, scientists reported a very high number of adult females perished.

As a Coalition for the protection of the Gray Whale, we believe that killing Gray whales at this time does not make any sense. We're witnessing the fourth consecutive

Continued overleaf...



CALIFORNIA GRAY WHALE COALITION
PROTECTING THE MOST ANCIENT BALEEN WHALE ALIVE TODAY

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year of low cow calf numbers and massive impacts of climate change on the whales' major prey.

The US delegation will be presenting population estimates to the IWC which are not current and are questionable. Population numbers from the current count being undertaken this season by NMFS will not be presented to the IWC Scientific Committee.

COALITION STANCE ON WHALING.

The Coalition works with a number of scientists. We know the biological parameters in the world's oceans are rapidly changing, often unpredictably.

The California Gray Whale is particularly vulnerable to extinction as a result of these major changes, as a specialist feeder dependent on a particular



amphipod which requires very cold water as its major prey.

All the evidence points to the fact that not only Gray Whales but all cetaceans are under threat because of a multiplicity of factors. We're witnessing more and more evidence of sick oceans. This is not the time to be killing whales. The IWC is out of synch with biological and environmental reality.

MORATORIUM.

Commonsense dictates that by adopting the precautionary principle, we recognise that all the information relevant to the California Gray Whale is not available. The Coalition has two sign on letters on the go. One letter is a Congressional sign on and the other will go to California Assembly and Senate members to sign on and forward to the Obama administration. These letters request the administration to advise the IWC Scientific Committee that there should be a moratorium on any Gray Whale quota until such time as there is current, reliable research on:- survivorship, sex ratio and breeding rates; and an investigation into the impact of climate change on major prey; availability of alternative food sources and the effects of changes in the whales's migration route.

UK MAKES A STAND.

The only country which has raised concerns about any suggestion of a 10 year quotas is the United Kingdom's IWC Commissioner, Richard Cowan.

He writes: "*Whilst appreciating the hard work put into the Chair's proposal for a compromise solution to the IWC's divisions, we are concerned that the proposal as it stands discards the progress made by the IWC towards scientifically based approaches to conservation and management, in favour of arbitrary catch limits based on political compromise. These catch limits would, for all practical purposes, be locked in place for 10 years regardless of the scientific information on the state of the populations. This would represent a reversal of the precautionary principle, to which our governments are firmly committed, both nationally and as EU members.*"

On Aboriginal subsistence whaling (ASW), he had this to say:-

"We believe it undesirable to include ASW catch limits (ie the 10 year quota) since this effectively does away with the five-year quota block which has governed the setting of quotas

and of the annual reviews which are applied to some."

Under the draft agreement, any problem which is impacting the Gray Whale may take years to be assessed or dealt with by the IWC.

Not good enough!

GRAY WHALE – A MIGRATORY SPECIES.

The California Gray Whale is a migratory whale. People in Mexico, the US, Canada, Alaska and Chukotka all rely on the whales for different reasons.

But in the end, the whales' survival and ability to maintain healthy populations must be paramount. Fishing communities in Baja are heavily dependent on gray whale tourism and the money which flows to their local economy. Whale watching brings in millions of dollars to the west Coast and beyond.

The California Gray Whale is the last remaining viable population of Gray Whales. Those of us who have been to the Mexican lagunas and played with the whales and their calves can never forget that feeling of awe and wonder. It is an amazing communication between species, one we should honour and deeply respect.

We need to ensure their future.

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Ask him about our moral and spiritual responsibilities to the whale nations.

ACTION It's essential that protests are sent to the offices of Sen. Barbara Boxer and Sen. Dianne Feinstein.

Office of U.S. Senator Barbara Boxer
1700 Montgomery St.,
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