

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 16, 2010

Honorable Jane Lubchenco, PhD
Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Administrator
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Dr. Lubchenco:

As Members of Congress representing coastal communities dependent on healthy marine ecosystems, we strongly urge National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to provide the International Whaling Commission (IWC) with all necessary and current information pertaining to California Gray Whale abundance counts and calf production estimates prior to the IWC Scientific Committee meeting on May 30, 2010.

The California Gray Whale is a magnificent creature, migrating 11,000 miles each year from Mexico to the Arctic and back. After decades of being decimated by the whaling industry, the California Gray Whale was added to the list of endangered and threatened wildlife under the Endangered Species Act in 1970. Largely as a result of these protections, the species began to recover, and was removed from the list in 1994. However, possibly as the result of changing ocean conditions related to climate change, the California Gray Whale populations crashed in 2001 and 2002 and, in recent years, there have been numerous reports of emaciated whales and low calf counts.

When the IWC Scientific Committee meets in May to consider the current threats and protections in place for the California Gray Whale, we believe that any new determination should be based on current abundance counts.

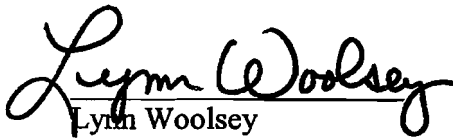
Unfortunately, the IWC lacks information concerning the California Gray Whale's current status because there has not been an abundance estimate for eight years. The much needed abundance count is being undertaken during the 2009-2010 season and another is planned for the 2010-2011 season. However, we are concerned that this census will have only limited use if it is not released in a timely manner before the IWC Science Committee meeting and if it does not clarify that past National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) figures were based on desk top studies rather than actual counts as required under the Marine Mammal Protection Act.

Therefore, we respectfully request that the NMFS undertake the following:

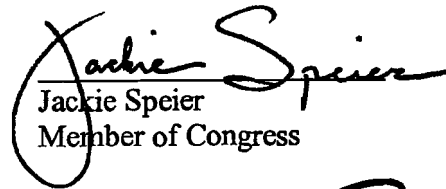
- Ensure that the California Gray Whale abundance estimates are publicly available within 6 months of the completion of the census;
- Release to the public California Gray Whale calf production figures since 2001;
- Clarify for the IWC Scientific Committee the different methodologies used in past Stock Assessment Reports and Field Studies that have led to confusion about actual California Gray Whale population numbers;
- Make recommendations to the IWC Scientific Committee concerning whether new quotas should be postponed until newer abundance counts are made available and the extent to which global climate change has impacted California Gray Whale migration routes and feeding behavior; and
- Undertake research on global climate change's impact on California Gray Whale primary feeding grounds and the impact of Orca predation on California Gray Whales.

We commend NMFS for its dedication to marine conservation, and for continuing to support the use of the best science available for stewardship of our oceans. Thank you for your consideration of this request and please don't hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

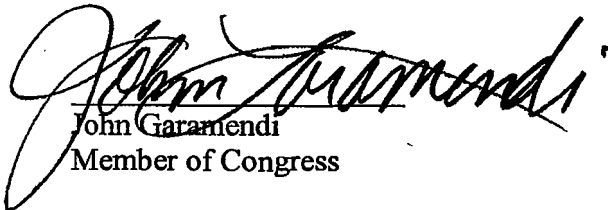
Sincerely,



Lynn Woolsey
Member of Congress



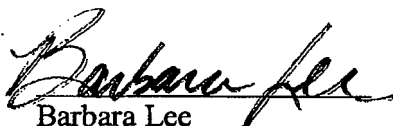
Jackie Speier
Member of Congress



John Garamendi
Member of Congress



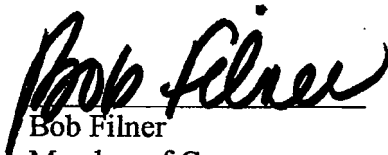
Sam Farr
Member of Congress



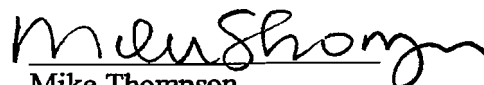
Barbara Lee
Member of Congress



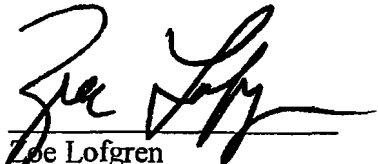
Lucille Roybal-Allard
Member of Congress



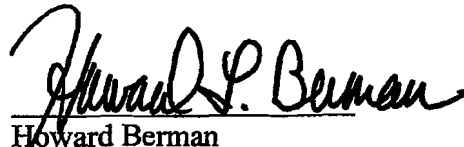
Bob Filner
Member of Congress



Mike Thompson
Member of Congress



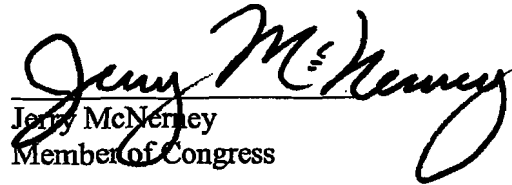
Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress



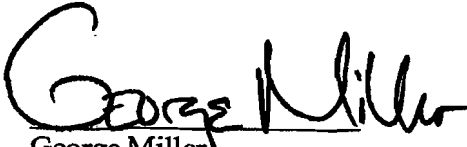
Howard Berman
Member of Congress



Mike Honda
Member of Congress



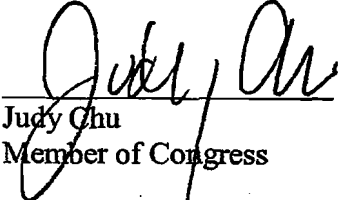
Jerry McNerney
Member of Congress



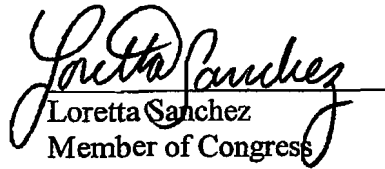
George Miller
Member of Congress



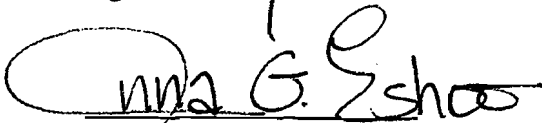
Lois Capps
Member of Congress



Judy Chu
Member of Congress



Loretta Sanchez
Member of Congress



Anna Eshoo
Member of Congress

Signed on April 19, 2010

Mazie K. Hirono

Mazie Hirono
Member of Congress