



CALIFORNIA GRAY WHALE COALITION

PROTECTING THE MOST ANCIENT BALEEN WHALE ALIVE TODAY

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BEAU BRIDGES SUPPORTS THE CALIFORNIA GRAY WHALE COALITION

Well known Hollywood actor Beau Bridges has put his weight behind the Coalition's efforts ! We love his words of support for the Gray Whale.



Beau Bridges

"Life began in the sea. So goes the whale...so goes mankind. An effort to save the whales benefits us all."

Beau comes from one of Hollywood's most famous acting families. Together with father Lloyd

and brother Jeff , the Bridges family have contributed major talent to some of the best films ever made.

The Coalition is deeply grateful for his willingness to help protect the Gray Whale.

DONATIONS PLEASE

The Coalition is doing a mighty job and has made enormous progress since its inception in February, 2008. Membership continues to grow, more and more City Councils are passing Resolutions of support for the Gray Whales. This year will be critical as the International Whaling Commission Scientific Committee will be making decisions on the future of the whales at its meeting in Morocco in June, 2010.

You can support our efforts by going to the donation link on the website. The link goes to Sea Sanctuary Inc., a 501 c 3. Sea Sanctuary is a minority founding member of the Coalition and is set up to take donations and grants.

FOLLOW THE LINK BELOW TO MAKE A DONATION ONLINE

San Francisco Mayor Proclaims California Gray Whale Day

The Coalition is delighted to announce that San Francisco's Mayor Gavin Newsom issued a Proclamation declaring December 7th, 2009 as CALIFORNIA GRAY WHALE DAY in San Francisco.

The Proclamation was personally handed to Coalition Founder Sue Arnold and California Director, Robin Mankey at City Hall in San Francisco. The words of the Proclamation can be found on the website but worth repeating the resolution here:-

"Therefore be it resolved, that I, Gavin Newsom, Mayor of the City and County of San Francisco, in urging the United States Congress and the President of the United States to call upon the National Marine and Fisheries Service to undertake an immediate and comprehensive assessment to determine if the California Gray Whale should be determined under

the Endangered Species Act of 1973 to be an endangered or threatened species."

The City of Ventura and the City of Morro Bay have also issued Proclamations which are on the website.



californiagraywhalecoalition.org/proclamations.shtml

MORE GOOD NEWS NMFS TO UNDERTAKE STUDIES

In early December, the Coalition sent Sue and Robin on a journey from San Francisco to San Diego to catch up with many Coalition members, whale watching captains and to take part in an historic meeting at La Jolla with National Marine & Fisheries scientists working on the California Gray Whale.

There's no doubt the Coalition efforts to ensure that NMFS carries out a current abundance estimate have paid off. All the pressure generated by our lobbying efforts in California and at the Congressional and Senate level have resulted in an agreement by the agency to carry out two abundance estimates. The first estimate started on December 30 and will continue until the end of February. A second abundance estimate will be done at the end of 2010 into 2011.

NMFS scientist, Wayne Perryman, described the studies in an email to Sue Arnold.

This year we will count southbound gray whales from Granite Canyon to estimate abundance and we will count northbound calves from Piedras Blancas to estimate calf production.

This is the good news. The bad news is the study results are not likely to be publicly available for "years" quote

unquote NMFS. The reason for the lengthy delay according to Wayne Perryman, is that NMFS wants to be sure the methodology is adequately analysed.

The Coalition is pleased that NMFS is finally, after 8 years, undertaking an abundance estimate and calf count. However, the Joint Resolution of the California Assembly and Senate calls for a comprehensive study of major threats facing the Gray Whale. Here's the essential text of the Joint Resolution:-

'This assessment should include all current research covering the migration routes, population dynamics, and mortality of the California gray whale, and the impacts of threats to the California gray whale, including the impact of global warming on critical feeding grounds;'

Unfortunately, the two abundance estimates and calf counts will not

address these issues although the numbers will certainly give some indication of the status of the population. What really worries the Coalition is the delay in establishing the estimates. If the numbers are down, as we anticipate, a delay in making relevant information publicly available is a big worry. We know there's a major El Nino in the Pacific, causing increases in seawater temperature and diminishing sea ice.

Research scientists contracted by the Coalition to look at the impact of climate change on the Gray Whale believe diminishing sea ice will have a catastrophic impact on the major prey of the whales. Being able to access population information at this critical point in time is vital to establishing whether the Gray Whales are having problems or not.

We did have an excellent meeting with NMFS scientists and agreed that it would be a good idea to have further meetings. The five scientists at the meeting were keen to impress on the Coalition their interest and concern for the whales had a high level of priority.

We'll see. But we're glad that the major lobbying effort in California and in Washington DC has had the desired impact. An abundance estimate is happening!

MORE SUPPORT FROM CALIFORNIA

During the Coalition's trip, we met with senior executives from the California Hotel & Lodging Association and the San Francisco Visitor and Convention Center.

It's important to engage the tourism industry in the work of the Coalition and we're happy to report that our efforts were well received.

We also visited with the folks from the Monterey Bay Aquarium and were encouraged by their willingness to get on board when a particular issue involving Gray Whales needs support.

We met with several whale watching captains and learned first-hand some interesting facts about Gray Whales which point to major changes in behaviour. Ken Manzoni at Adventure Rib Rides in San Diego has seen the

whales surface feeding on small fish! As Gray whales are bottom-feeders, this information is nothing short of astounding.

As well, we're hearing from scientists working in the Bering Sea that the whales are moving much further north looking for food. The scientists say the whales are feeding in the water columns and feeding on species which are not their usual diet.

There is growing concern the extra miles travelled looking for food may seriously deplete the whales' energy requirements and diminish their ability to become pregnant or to sustain a pregnancy. More reasons why the results of an abundance estimate need to be made available as soon as possible.

MEXICO SAN IGNACIO LAGUNA

The Coalition will ensure that representatives go to San Ignacio Laguna during the migration to check out the status of the whales.

San Ignacio has been the focus of research and regular counts of Gray Whales for many years and provides probably the best set of data available for Mexico.

For the past five years, the population numbers in the Laguna have been low. In 2007, the lowest mid-calf count in 30 years was recorded. In 2009, Coalition members visited San Ignacio and met with many of the Mexican owners of whale watching/fishing co-operatives. Their information on the whales is invaluable with all their years of experience and knowledge of the Laguna.