



WWF *for a living planet*

WWF Submission to Pew Whale Commission



9-10th February 2009

With several million supporters and a network of offices and projects in more than 100 countries on five continents, WWF is one of the world's largest independent conservation organizations, and has maintained a consistent record of conservation successes.

WWF has been involved with whales, whaling and the IWC since the 1970s, and has active offices in the majority of the IWC contracting parties – both pro-whaling and anti-whaling. Of the governments in the IWC's Small Working Group, WWF has offices or associates in Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, France, Italy, Netherlands, New Zealand, South Africa, Sweden, UK and USA, as well as Cameroon, China, Denmark, Japan, and Norway.

WWF's positions on whaling and the IWC are carefully developed based on input from these offices, which represent the full variety of perspectives and positions currently existing in the IWC. WWF's positions therefore have the unique benefit of being globally representative and balanced, and based on our conservation mission.

In this document, we draw the most critical parts of WWF's position to the attention of the Pew Whale Commission, and hope they provide useful insights and guidance to the participants of the meeting. We have been invited to participate in the meeting and look forward to constructive dialogue on these issues.

Commercial whaling moratorium

The Commercial whaling moratorium is one of the world's greatest conservation successes, and is responsible for bringing many whale species back from the brink of extinction. However the damage caused by past unsustainable whaling is not yet healed. Several whale species and populations are still severely depleted, having managed only slight increases from the levels they were reduced to during the whaling heyday. In many cases populations depleted by past whaling are being impacted by other threats, preventing their full recovery even in the absence of whaling. In addition, the IWC has failed to develop as of yet an international, precautionary and conservation-based enforceable management and compliance system for whaling. Therefore, lifting of the commercial whaling moratorium is currently premature.

WWF position: The commercial whaling moratorium must remain in place

Scientific Whaling (research under special permit)

When the loophole allowing the killing of whales for scientific research was created 60 years ago, lethal methods were the only research options available. However in six decades, science has changed and advanced immeasurably. Techniques such as acoustic surveys, satellite tracking, biopsy DNA sampling and fecal sampling mean that lethal research on whales in the 21st century simply isn't necessary. If the IWC is to move forwards as a well managed, current and relevant organisation, it must bring itself up-to-date by shutting down archaic practices which serve only to increase the divisions within the organisation.

WWF position: The scientific whaling loophole must be removed

Trade restrictions

Whilst there is a moratorium on commercial whaling, it is counter intuitive for any international trade in whale products to be allowed. International trade would be in contravention of the spirit of the moratorium and the listing of all great whale species on Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES)—a listing adopted by the CITES Parties at the request of the IWC.

WWF believes that international commercial trade in whale meat is not necessary in the 21st Century. No cultural requirement for whale meat should necessitate international trade, and as

an industry, whale watching offers greater and more sustainable economic returns over the long term. In addition, international trade inflames relations within the IWC, and goes against the spirit of constructive negotiation. Any potential whaling authorised by the IWC must therefore be for domestic consumption only.

WWF position: All IWC contracting parties should remove their reservations to the listing of great whale species on Appendix I of CITES. Governments should not submit proposals to transfer to Appendix II any whale species included in CITES Appendix I.

Coastal whaling

Although it is imperative that the commercial whaling moratorium be upheld, WWF acknowledges the widely varied cultural attitudes toward the conservation and management of whales, and recognises that the current stalemate in the IWC is preventing thorough management and regulation of whaling, and effective conservation action by the Commission. As such WWF recognises that a way forward to solve the impasse in the IWC may necessitate some discussion of differentiating between coastal and high seas whaling. High seas whaling, particularly in the IWC Southern Ocean Sanctuary, is particularly threatening to whale species and ecosystem health. However any discussion of coastal whaling must be conducted on the basis that all whaling would be fully under the provisions of the IWC's Revised Management Procedure (RMP), and would be for domestic use only. In addition, agreement must be reached on a precautionary and conservation-based enforceable management and compliance system if any whaling were to be authorised by the IWC.

WWF position: Governments should focus on the elimination of high seas whaling

Environmental threats (including climate change and bycatch) and the Conservation Committee

For the IWC to be a current and relevant institution, it must bring itself in line with almost all other international management and conservation institutions by adopting the principles of Ecosystem Based Management (EBM). EBM in its simplest form means that when managing natural resources, all aspects which influence those resources must be considered. With the environmental threats of bycatch, pollution, acoustic noise, ship strikes and climate change in particular increasing by the minute, the consideration of environmental threats is

more critical than ever. The Conservation Committee has been a useful vehicle to drive positive action to address these environmental threats, and must be strengthened.

WWF position: The IWC must address and work to mitigate environmental threats to cetaceans.

Civil Society

Civil society has been a fundamental part of the whaling debate since its existence. ‘Save the whales’ was one of the first and most successful environmental campaigns ever seen. Since then, civil society around the world has maintained an incredibly strong affinity for whales and passion for their conservation. It is vital that the IWC function in line with major multilateral environmental agreements, such as CITES, CMS, and CMS—and function in an open, transparent manner. For the IWC to shut civil society out of negotiations on the future of the IWC will quite simply prevent these negotiations from being successful.

WWF position: Civil society must be fully engaged in the IWC

Small cetaceans

More than 85% of cetacean species are ‘small cetaceans’, and this group includes some of the most critically endangered species on the planet, such as the Yangtze river dolphin, which is possibly extinct. These species are facing a huge range of threats, including unsustainable harvests and bycatch, and their migratory nature necessitates international management as much as their larger relatives. However there is no one international instrument responsible for the conservation of all of these species globally, and therefore no institution to ensure appropriate management and conservation of all these species if countries were to turn increasingly to small cetacean hunts.

WWF position: The remit of the IWC includes all cetaceans – large and small alike, and the IWC should recognize that.

The IWC in its international context

The Pew Whale Commission provides a unique opportunity for the issues of whaling and the IWC to be considered in the broader context of the relationships which exist between the governments concerned, with respect to other multilateral environmental agreements and management organisations to which they are party, and with a clearer perspective on the

economic basis of whaling as compared to other industries. This is critical, as discussions within the IWC have often been hampered by entrenched viewpoints solely based on whales on whaling. With this in mind, WWF urges participants to consider the issues under discussion and propose solutions that may not already be under consideration within the IWC context. Such a solution could involve the engagement of foreign ministries, at the ministerial level, of key governments to negotiate solutions to the current impasse in the IWC. In addition, the Pew Whale Commission could propose fundamental changes to the IWC which would bring it into line with other MEAs or natural resource management organisations in terms of governance, Ecosystem Based Management and the precautionary principle¹. WWF stands ready to engage with the participants of the Pew Whale Commission in these discussions, and looks forward to a constructive and positive meeting.

WWF's mission is to stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature, by:

- conserving the world's biological diversity
- ensuring that the use of renewable natural resources is sustainable
- promoting the reduction of pollution and wasteful consumption

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¹ WWF is pleased to provide supporting documentation on governance within the IWC, and the internationally agreed context of ecosystem based management to the Pew Whale Commission. These two reports are also available online:

Governance: <http://assets.panda.org/downloads/governancepaper.pdf>

EBM: http://assets.panda.org/downloads/wwf_ecosystem_paper_final_wlogo.pdf



Together, we can make the world's oceans safe for whales.
panda.org/species/whales

