

STAFF SUMMARY FOR FEBRUARY 6, 2019

29. COMMERCIAL WHALING IN JAPAN**Today's Item**Information Action

Discuss Japan's announcement about commercial whaling and potentially approve sending a letter to Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

Summary of Previous/Future Actions (N/A)**Background**

In late Dec of 2018, Japan announced that it is withdrawing from the 89-member International Whaling Commission (IWC) and, for the first time in 30 years, will resume commercial whale hunting beginning in Jul 2019. By withdrawing from IWC, Japan will cease taking whales from the Antarctic Ocean and Southern Hemisphere where it has been engaged in what it terms "research whaling," hunting about 600 whales annually. Japan will now conduct commercial whaling within its territorial sea and its 200-mile exclusive economic zone.

Japan argues that IWC has failed to live up to its initial dual mandate established in 1946 to find a balance between preserving whale stocks and allowing the "orderly development" of the whaling industry. IWC banned commercial whaling in 1986. After failing to reach an agreement at a global conference in Sep 2018 to resume commercial whaling while aiming for sustainability, Japan is now following through on a threat to withdraw from the global body. Japan has indicated that the whaling hunts will respect catch limits based on IWC calculations in order to avoid a negative impact on cetacean resources. Japan has hunted whales for centuries, but has reduced its catch following international protests and declining demand at home.

Numerous countries and international non-governmental conservation organizations have expressed disappointment in and criticized Japan's decision to resume what some are calling an outdated, unnecessary and inhumane practice.

On Jan 14, 2019, the current chair of IWC issued a statement confirming Japan's withdrawal (Exhibit 1).

Significant Public Comments

Approximately three dozen commenters have indicated support for sending a letter to Japan or to take action to stop whaling in general; none are form emails. See examples in Exhibit 2.

Recommendation

FGC staff: Should FGC wish to send a letter, identify one Commissioner to work with staff to draft a letter to Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on behalf of FGC.

Exhibits

1. [IWC statement on government of Japan withdrawal from IWC, dated Jan 14, 2019](#)
2. [Sample emails regarding commercial whaling](#)

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Motion/Direction

Moved by _____ and seconded by _____ that the Commission authorizes staff to work with the identified Commissioner to draft and send a letter to Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe regarding Japan's withdrawal from IWC and resumption of commercial whaling, as discussed today.



INTERNATIONAL
WHALING COMMISSION

14 Jan 2019

Statement on Government of Japan withdrawal from the IWC

The International Whaling Commission has received notification that the Government of Japan will withdraw from the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling in 2019.

This notification was received by the United States as depository for the Convention, and thereafter communicated to all IWC member governments.

The current Chair of the IWC, Andrej Bibic of Slovenia, said:

“The Government of Japan has played an active and integral role in both the Commission and its Scientific Committee for many years, and their contribution will be missed.

Like many international organisations, the IWC does not always find it easy to reach agreement, and the different views on commercial whaling are well-documented. I hope that the environment of respect that has grown at the IWC in recent years will be maintained. I hope also that we will continue work on the range of topics where there is both agreement and common interest, such as establishing population estimates of cetaceans and understanding the state of their environment, as well as important issues of concern, such as bycatch which kills over 300,000 cetaceans every year.

The Commission will of course need to consider the implications of the Government of Japan’s withdrawal and we will do this in due course. In the meantime, we continue with the wide-ranging and challenging work programme that was agreed at our meeting in Brazil last September.”

Sample Email Messages Regarding Commercial Whaling

From: Lindy Ratcliffe
Sent: Monday, January 21, 2019 2:05 PM
To: FGC <FGC@fgc.ca.gov>
Subject: Japan whaling

Please add my name to the list of concerned citizens who oppose the Japanese whaling industry fishing in waters off the CA coast. Actually, I object to the whaling industry as a whole. Jim Hines of the Sierra Club has indicated that CA and Japan have a economic relationship, and that if you make it clear to them that the relationship could be adversely affected by their actions, it may have an impact on their decision. I intend to post this on social media and urge people to boycott anything that could be bought from Japan and to voice their concerns to you, also.

Sincerely
Lindy Ratcliffe

-----Original Message-----

From: Mary's Gmail
Sent: Monday, January 21, 2019 9:32 PM
To: FGC <FGC@fgc.ca.gov>
Subject: Commission Agenda Item #29

To Whom It May Concern,

It is unconscionable that the country of Japan is set to begin killing whales again. This is barbaric, inhumane, and extremely myopic. The creatures of this world need to be recognized for their invaluable contributions to the life of our planet, not just for the exploitation of humans.

Japan is known for its culture of beauty and grace. The horrendous killing of incredible, intelligent, amazing whales, for no reason of necessity, would seem to reveal a vicious, ignorant underside of Japanese society.

These magnificent creatures, should be protected by the knowledge and goodness of the humans who inhabit the earth with them.

PLEASE DO NOT let the crime of whaling begin again. Haven't we, as human beings, with really big brains, learned anything?

Mary L. Eninger

From: Teresa Earle
Sent: Wednesday, January 23, 2019 10:39 AM
To: FGC <FGC@fgc.ca.gov>
Subject: Commission Agenda Item # 29 for upcoming Feb 6th meeting

Dear Commissioners:

I have learned from years of following the travesty of whaling that Japan will soon officially withdraw from the International Whaling Commission, and will start killing whales in a few months. I believe that other nations have also announced that they intend to begin whaling

too...the only way to stop this murder is to apply worldwide public pressure to stop the slaughter by Japanese whalers.

I strongly implore you to vote to send a state letter to the Japanese Prime Minister and other Japanese government leaders expressing California's strong opposition to Japanese whaling. I know you have a meeting of CA fish and game on Feb 6 and I ask that you vote to have Calif send this letter with strong wording as we are a recognized world leader in conservation and rationality in protecting our wildlife. It means a lot that Calif takes a strong step in this battle and you as commissioners have the power to show the world that whales matter! Japan cares about Calif opinion and business and this letter will hold great weight.

Thank you for your attention to this matter!

Teresa Earle
90264
Calif resident

From: Elizabeth Black
Sent: Friday, January 18, 2019 9:34 PM
To: FGC <FGC@fgc.ca.gov>
Subject: No whaling

Please do not allow Japan to hunt and kill whales off the coast of the United states of America.
Thank you,
Elizabeth R. Black

Oak View, CA