

## Japanese Whaling & the International Whaling Commission

Tel: (202) 462-1177  
Fax: (202) 483-8683

702 H Street, NW,  
#300  
Washington, D.C.  
20001

www.  
greenpeaceusa.  
org

Since 1971 Greenpeace has been a leading voice of the environmental movement. We work throughout the world to protect oceans and ancient forests, and to fight toxic pollution, genetic engineering, global warming and nuclear threats. Without compromise, Greenpeace takes on powerful political and corporate opposition to protect the future of our planet.

### • Historical Whaling in the Antarctic

Whaling in Japan began 400 years ago. Hunts were restricted to a few areas and nets were used to catch the whales. At this time, eating whale meat was a tradition in some areas of Japan. In 1934, Japan began more modern whaling in the Antarctic. Before then, Antarctic whaling was conducted mainly by countries such as Norway and the United Kingdom.

### • How the Whales Saved the Japanese People

During World War II, virtually no whaling took place in the Antarctic. In 1945, after two Japanese cities (Hiroshima and Nagasaki) had been bombed and the war had ended, whaling began again out of necessity. The U.S. allied forces occupied Japan and trade routes between Japan and other countries were not open. Without certain imports, the Japanese were not receiving enough protein and the people began to suffer from malnourishment and starvation. With limited options, American General Douglas MacArthur gave permission to the Japanese people to send a whaling fleet to the Antarctic to bring back whale meat to feed the people. The Japanese people were saved from starvation and whaling in the Antarctic resumed.

### • Antarctic Whaling Today

Following the decimation of whale species across the world's oceans by commercial whaling in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the international community agreed to establish an indefinite moratorium on commercial whaling. It entered into force in 1986. But the Fisheries Agency of Japan (FAJ) has continued whaling in the Antarctic, claiming it is for scientific purposes. And over the years, the number of whales hunted has increased. A powerful part of the Japanese bureaucracy, the FAJ is not answerable to the Japanese public. The FAJ claims that eating whale meat is a Japanese tradition, despite growing public sentiment to the contrary – recent polls show that 69% of the Japanese public do NOT supporting commercial whaling in the Southern Ocean Whale Sanctuary.

### • The International Whaling Commission (IWC)

This year, the International Whaling Commission (IWC) will meet in Anchorage, Alaska. It will be the 59th meeting in the organization's history. The IWC was established to try and regulate whaling and conserve whales. It first met in 1949, and has met every year since. The Commission's Scientific Committee will meet for two weeks, followed by a week of working groups, and then the main political meeting where the decisions are made takes place from May 28-31.

### • From Regulating Whaling to Conserving Whales

In 1972, the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment passed a resolution by 52 votes to 0, calling for a ten-year moratorium on commercial whaling. Similar resolutions were introduced at the IWC in 1972, 1973, and 1974; however, none were passed until an influx of conservation-minded nations allowed a series of protective measures to be adopted. In 1979, the IWC banned the hunting of all whale species (except minke whales) by factory ships, and declared the entire Indian Ocean a whale sanctuary. This was followed by the adoption of an indefinite global moratorium on commercial whaling, in 1982, to take effect in the 1985/86 Antarctic whaling season. The last major conservation measure adopted by the IWC was the declaration of the entire Southern Ocean as a whale sanctuary in 1994.

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## • Loopholes and Evasions

Despite the moratorium on commercial whaling, loopholes in the IWC convention allow commercial whaling to continue disguised as ‘science’. Also, under IWC regulations, any member country can lodge an objection to an IWC decision within 90 days of that decision being made, and thus be exempt from that decision. Three countries have used these two mechanisms to dodge complying with the global moratorium on commercial whaling:

- **Norway** lodged an official objection to the moratorium in 1982, and is not bound by it. It continues to hunt minke whales in the North Atlantic.
- **Iceland** left the IWC in 1992 but rejoined in 2003 with a reservation to the moratorium. It began commercial whaling in late 2006.
- **Japan** conducts commercial whaling in the Antarctic and North Pacific under a loophole in the IWC convention that allows countries to kill whales for “scientific research.” It began this “scientific whaling” in the Antarctic in 1987, and in the North Pacific in 1996. The IWC has repeatedly requested that Japan not conduct this “research,” but under IWC rules, Japan is free to ignore the IWC and set its own quotas. The meat from this “research whaling” is packaged and sold in stores and markets across Japan.

## • WHAT YOU CAN DO

Under the guise of science, or just by opting out of the system, thousands of whales are commercially hunted across our oceans each year. Yet whale populations, already compromised following decades of too much hunting, now also face threats from ship strikes, underwater noise pollution (like sonar), and climate change. Enough is enough! Commercial whaling has no place in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. You can help by taking action to remind our decision-makers that plenty of work still needs to be done to save the whales:

- ✓ Make a phone call to ask the Bush Administration to do everything in their power to defend the whales.

President Bush, White House: (202) 456-1414

Secretary Rice, State Department: (202) 647-4000

Secretary Gutierrez, Commerce Department: (202) 482-2000

- ✓ Visit our Whale Defender website at [www.whales.greenpeace.org/us](http://www.whales.greenpeace.org/us). Download the whale activist toolkit, and join thousands of folks from around the world who are taking action to defend the whales. You’ll find fact sheets, petitions, sample letters, and other materials to help you make a difference.
- ✓ Become a Greenpeace Supporter at [www.greenpeaceusa.org](http://www.greenpeaceusa.org)