

MEXICO

Voluntary National Cetacean Conservation Report, 2009

While recognizing the existence of differing views regarding the IWC Conservation Mexico considers that with the submission of national information on a voluntary basis is a way to address cetacean conservation matters, in a spirit of cooperation, and a via to learn from experiences in other Countries.

National Governmental Authority Submitting the Report:

Instituto Nacional de Ecología (INE)- Secretaría del Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales (Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources)

1. Legal Developments (laws, regulations and other regulatory measures related to cetaceans)

- Mexico is currently under the process of reviewing Mexican Standard 131 that establishes guidelines and specifications for the development of whalewatching as related to the protection and conservation of whales and its habitat.
- Article 141 of the Internal Regulations of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (Art. 145, paragraphs XI, XII, XIII, XIV, XV and XVII), the National Commission for Natural Protected Areas (CONANP) has the mandated to formulate, promote, implement and evaluate projects for the conservation, recovery of species and populations, including several marine mammal species.

3. Current Government Programs Related to Cetacean Conservation

The Conservation Program for Endangered Species (Programa de Conservación de Especies en Riesgo- PROCER) instruments specific Species Conservation Action Programs (Programas de Acción para la Conservación de Especies- PACE) for each species within a list of 25 selected species which include several marine mammals. Each PACE must be comprised of a series of components which are grouped into actions and strategies critical to recover the populations of each species that make up the program. There will also be allocation of a specific budget for its implementation until 2012 and established the goals and success indicators for evaluation and, where appropriate, compliance with the achievements or shortfalls identified. For each species at risk served within each of these programs, CONANP develops, in coordination with Working Groups consisting of experts from the governmental, academic and civil society, the species-specific (PACE). Currently the vaquita PACE has been published and is being implemented. Blue and humpback whales PACE are being developed.

Vaquita recent and current recovery actions

- SEMARNAT applied PACE resources to retire gillnets.
- Vaquita Refuge Area (1, 263.85 km²) closed to fishing activities and an economic compensation scheme established.
- CONAPESCA assess all fishing licenses and permits
- A law enforcement program is in place coordinated by the Federal Attorney for Environmental Protection (PROFEPA).
- Experiments with alternative fishing gear (suriperas and changos)
- A public awareness and environmental education program is going on together with the State Governments of Baja California and Federal Government.
- 500 illegal pangas have been kept out from any fishing activities.
- 246 pangas were bought-out.

- 161 pangas have changed fishing gears.
- A plan to rebuild a shrimp farm– 180 fishing boats will be retired.

Gray whales

The joint project with the University of Baja California Sur and US researchers Ecosystem Approach for Scientific Monitoring for the Laguna San Ignacio Wetlands Complex (LSIWC) to establish a long-term sustained science based monitoring program that will provide scientific information relevant to lagoon resource management questions and concerns about development, ecotourism, and the sustainability of the LSIWC over time. The status of the lagoon *ecosystem* will be monitored routinely by measuring a suite of key physical and biological parameters or

“*ecological indicators*” that will: (1) provide an index of the ecological health of the Lagoon and its living marine resources (e.g., whales, dolphins, turtles, select finfish & shell fish, birds, plankton, water quality), and (2) ensure over the long term that scientific information is available to evaluate trends in the marine life that depend on Laguna San Ignacio as a primary habitat.

4. Current threats to Cetacean Conservation and Management Measures Taken/Proposed

Main threats to cetaceans in Mexico, as in other Countries are fisheries interactions: incidental captures in gillnets, longlines and other fishing gear and coastal habitat degradation by coastal development programs, mainly in the Gulf of California. In this context gray whales have been monitored in the west coast of Baja California for coastal development (NLG plant) and will continue to do so with the potential development of a new marine Port in Punta Colonet, approximately 150 mi south of the US-Mexico border.