

Proposed Schedule amendment to permit the catching of minke whales from the Okhotsk Sea-West Pacific Stock by small-type coastal whaling vessels

Submitted by Japan

This proposal is to add the following sub-paragraph (f) to existing paragraph 10 of the Schedule.

(f) Notwithstanding the other provisions of paragraph 10, the taking of up to (***) minke whales from the Okhotsk Sea-West Pacific stock of the North Pacific in the coastal waters east of Japan north of 35°N and west of 150°E (excluding the Okhotsk Sea) shall be permitted for each of the years 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011 and the meat and products are to be used exclusively for local consumption.

* Explanatory note: Adoption of this schedule amendment will require amendment to Table 1 of the Schedule.

Since the imposition of the moratorium on commercial whaling in Japanese coastal waters twenty years ago, the Government of Japan has repeatedly requested an interim relief allocation of minke whales in order to alleviate the hardships of small-type coastal whaling communities; Abashiri, Ayukawa, Wada and Taiji. These requests have been continually rejected by the International Whaling Commission even though the Commission has recognized the severe impacts of the moratorium on the four small-type whaling communities and agreed to work expeditiously to alleviate their distress (ref. resolutions IWC-45-51(1993), 1995-3, 1996-1, 2000-1, 2001-6, and 2004-2).

This proposal would only allow community-based whaling in order to reinstate traditional and local practices associated with catching, processing, distribution and consumption of whale meat, and revitalize traditional festivals and rituals of the regions.

Community Whaling

Whaling to be permitted with the adoption of this proposal is community-based local whaling. Vessels and people to be involved are based in the traditional local whaling communities. A limited entry Ministerial licensing system is in place so that new entrants to the community whaling are strictly restricted. The whaling operation consists primarily of one-day trips with a small boat. The size of the whaling vessel is also restricted. Landing, processing, distribution and consumption under the community whaling will also be local.

Scientific Basis

Whaling grounds will be restricted to areas 10 nautical miles or more off the Pacific coast of northern Japan (in so-called subarea 7), excluding the Okhotsk Sea. The whaling season will be a consecutive six month period within the period of March 1 to November

30. These measures will ensure that catches will have no negative impact on J stock (see Appendices I and VI).

Catches of minke whales under Special Permit in accordance with Article VIII of ICRW will be reduced by (***) animals so that the total take will not be increased by the adoption of this quota. In the western North Pacific, 220 minke whales per year are now being taken as part of the JARPN II program from the same stock that will be exploited by community-based whaling. Appendices II, III, IV, and V clearly shows that the take of O stock animals and the possible take of a small number of J stock animals will have negligible impact on the stocks.

Monitoring and Control

(a) National Inspector

One national inspector will be on board each whaling vessel during whaling operations. Another national inspector will be at each land station to oversee the landing and the processing of the harvested whales as well as data collection. The national inspector shall also perform duties as a biological researcher.

(b) International Observer

If an IWC member country wishes, it may send one international observer, who can communicate in Japanese, to be at each land station to observe the landing and the processing of the harvested whales as well as to collect required data. The stationing of such international observers shall be in accordance with a bilateral agreement on international observers concluded between the Government of Japan and the country which wishes to send the said observer.

(c) VMS

All whaling vessels shall be equipped with a VMS to monitor whaling operations from land bases so that national inspectors and international observers can check the operations.

(d) DNA Register System

All whales taken will be included in the domestic DNA registration system which is already in place and which includes information which allows individual identification of whales.

(e) Oversight Committee

An Oversight Committee will be established in order to review the results of implementing monitoring and control measures. The Committee will be formed by a team of technical experts at the end of each whaling season to review reports prepared by inspectors and observers and to determine if improvements or additional measures are required.