

Conformance in Preparing Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling Needs Statements

United States of America

Background

Under the ASW process, a member government is required to submit a “needs statement” to request an ASW catch limit. Initiated in 1979 for the Alaska Eskimo hunt for bowhead whales and extended to all other ASW hunts in 1980, the Commission commented that governments were responsible for determining the needs of their indigenous peoples and required them to submit a needs statement to request a catch limit. The needs statement explains how the hunt meets the IWC’s definition of Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling (ASW). Based upon the definition of ASW adopted by the Commission in 1982, such hunts must have the following characteristics:

- Undertaken by aboriginal, indigenous or native peoples.
- Who have a continuing traditional dependence on whaling.
- For local consumption to meet nutritional, subsistence and cultural needs.

While the above three points define the basic building blocks for countries to follow in preparing a needs statement, the Commission has not provided any guidance on the format for this document. A number of member governments have commented that, as a result, a great deal of variability exists amongst the statements, leading to confusion in understanding the information provided. These members have suggested that guidance is needed to assure that major issues are uniformly covered and to provide for ease of review, thereby enhancing the understanding of these critical documents.

Recommendation

Based upon a review of ASW delegations’ previous submissions, the United States has prepared the attached “Guidelines for Quantification of Nutritional, Subsistence and Cultural Needs” and proposes that the ASW Subcommittee consider recommending their adoption by the Commission. Consideration should also be given to posting the most current needs statements on the Commission’s website and updating them as needed.

Guidelines for Quantification of Nutritional, Subsistence and Cultural Needs

Member governments wishing to obtain a catch limit subject to the provisions of Schedule paragraph 13 should provide the following information to be contained in the required “needs statement”:

TITLE: Needs Statement Submitted by the Government of [X] on Behalf of [Y]

- History of native culture and relationship to whales
 - History of native people
 - Native relationship to whales (nutritional, health, spiritual, societal and economic)
 - General and specific map of the area
 - Native demographics
 - Relationship to IWC
 - Recent native census data
- Whales and Whaling
 - Targeted species
 - Historical landings (shown in graphical form over time)
 - Hunting methods including discussion of any issues such as struck and lost whales
 - Distribution system/Costs of whaling
 - Domestic regulations and monitoring
 - Animal welfare aspects
- Calculation of subsistence and cultural needs
 - Description of methods used to determine needs
 - Discussion of changes since last report
 - Proposed catch limit submitted for IWC’s consideration
- References and links to citations and published literature