

WHAT IS THE IWC?

The International Whaling Commission (IWC) is the global organization responsible for the management of whaling and the conservation of whales. At present, there are more than 70 members of the IWC, though a number are in substantial arrears and are therefore unlikely to vote; and additional countries often join in the last few days preceding the annual meeting. The 2007 annual commission meeting will be held in Anchorage, Alaska, May 28-31. Japan is likely to mobilize a strong pro-whaling bloc of votes in an ongoing attempt to undermine 30 years of whale conservation.

- **IWC membership is open to any nation that formally adheres to the 1946 *International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling*** --After commercial whaling devastated many whale populations earlier last century, the IWC has taken measures to protect the planet's whales. These include a suspension of all commercial whaling from 1986 and the establishment of the Indian Ocean Sanctuary in 1979 and the Southern Ocean Sanctuary in 1994. However, more than 30,000 whales have been killed for commercial purposes since the 1986 moratorium, many of these because so-called "scientific whaling" is allowed under an IWC loophole.
- **Japan has embarked on a concerted "vote consolidation" program that could see pro-whaling countries control a simple majority of votes at future IWC meetings** -- This bloc has already sunk votes to set up more whale sanctuaries in the south Pacific and south Atlantic oceans.
- **In defiance of the international community, Japan has also announced it will kill more whales as part of its so-called "scientific research" program** -- Japan argues that eating whale is an important part of Japanese culture, but independent polling shows that 61% of Japanese people have not eaten it since childhood and a scant one percent claim they eat it once a month. Japan also argues that whales need to be killed because of the oversimplistic and scientifically dubious argument that *because whales eat fish, fewer whales means more fish*. In the past fifteen years Japan has increased its catch five-fold to 1,200 whales each year and seems determined to increase this even further. Japan intends to add 50 humpback whales starting in 2007/08 Antarctic season.
- **The IWC is considering a Revised Management Scheme (RMS) for commercial whaling** -- Japan and Norway are trying to push through a weak version of the RMS that would automatically lift the current ban on whaling and one that contains insufficient enforcement provisions. Japan and Norway have also stalled the introduction of a whale DNA register held by the IWC as part of the RMS. This is the only part of the RMS that could reveal the existence of illegal whaling. IFAW is working to protect and maintain the moratorium on commercial whaling.
- **IWC and Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling** -- The IWC recognizes that aboriginal subsistence whaling is different from commercial whaling. For more information on the IWC and aboriginal subsistence whaling visit the IWC website at: <http://www.iwcoffice.org/conservation/aboriginal.htm>

IFAW is opposed to all forms of commercial whaling (including so-called "scientific whaling") and is committed to ending it, as it is inherently cruel, unnecessary because it meets no pressing human need, and poses a serious threat to the survival of the world's remaining whales. For more than 20 years, IFAW has devoted considerable scientific and other resources to promote whale conservation including: working closely with the IWC, its members and scientists; operating the research vessel *Song of the Whale*; promoting the establishment of whale sanctuaries; developing responsible whale-watching industries and raising public awareness about these majestic animals.

For more information visit IFAW at: www.stopwhaling.org