

MEXICO

**Voluntary National Cetacean Conservation Report, 2014-2016  
Submitted to the Conservation Committee**

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 y Cambio Climático (INECC), Comisión de Áreas Naturales Protegidas (CONANP), Secretaría del Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales (SEMARNAT)

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

- Agreement whereby suspends fishing using drift-nets, and longlines in the north of the Gulf of California and the Strategy on the Comprehensive Care of the Upper Gulf Marine Ecosystem to protect vaquita (April 2015):

- o Ban completely all gillnet fisheries for at least two years in the area proposed by CIRVA.
- o Exempt "rodeo"-style fishing for corvina from Feb 1 to April 30.
- o Provide full compensation to all fishermen and those who work in fishery-related activities (eg, workers in shrimp packing plants). (\$37 million/year)
- o Create community enforcement groups.
- o Enforcement coordinated by the Mexican Navy
- o Development of Alternative Fishing Gear
- o Vaquita Monitoring program

**2. 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 has also be allocation of a specific budget for its implementation, 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). The vaquita PACE has been published and implemented until 2012 when it was replaced by the Agreement and Strategy mentioned in the item 1.

Blue, humpback and whales PACE were developed.

- Blue Whales:

The general goal of the former Program is: to keep the current population status and health of the blue whale migrating to Mexican waters, through the promotion of the sustainable use of the species by the touristic activities, regular monitoring program of individuals and the promoting the conservation of its habitat. ([http://www.conanp.gob.mx/pdf\\_especies/PACE%20Ballena%20azul-1.pdf](http://www.conanp.gob.mx/pdf_especies/PACE%20Ballena%20azul-1.pdf)).

- Humpback whales

The general goal is the recovery of the populations of the humpback whale, through the conservation and management of the species and its habitat.

([http://www.conanp.gob.mx/pdf\\_especies/PACE-B-JOROBADA-1.pdf](http://www.conanp.gob.mx/pdf_especies/PACE-B-JOROBADA-1.pdf))

- Fin whales

This program is being developed 2014, its principal actions have been aimed at estimating population size and trends through three methodologies, and to evaluate the health of this resident population in the Gulf of California.

Vaquita recent and current recovery actions

- Agreement whereby suspends fishing using drift-nets, and longlines in the north of the Gulf of California and the Strategy on the Comprehensive Care of the Upper Gulf Marine Ecosystem to protect vaquita (see item 1)
- Emergency regulations establishing a gillnet exclusion zone covering the full range of the vaquita. This was an enlargement of the protection area, the Vaquita Refuge, from 126,385 Ha to nearly 1,200,000 Ha
- Enforcement. Strengthening the team of agencies involved and building coordination across them, providing new high-speed patrol boats plus 13 other enforcement boats, 1 helicopter, 1 airplane, 135 navy personnel, and recently last generation Drones, and committing to a greater overall enforcement presence in the region led by the Navy
- In the last two years the Navy has confiscated over 725 nets extending about 42,000 mts.
- Meetings of the Comité Internacional para la Recuperación de la Vaquita (CIRVA). Reports are included in the Scientific Committee Reports:
  - CIRVA. (2015) Report of the Sixth Meeting of the Comité Internacional para la Recuperación de la Vaquita (CIRVA-6) 66a Report of the Scientific Committee (SC/66a). Annex L, Appendix 2:23-25.
  - CIRVA. (2017) Report of the Seventh Meeting of the Comité Internacional para la Recuperación de la Vaquita (CIRVA-VII). Report of the Scientific Committee (SC/66b). Annex L, In Press.
- Experiments with alternative fishing gear for shrimp (suriperas and changos) took place and of the two gears tested only the “chango” a small type of trawling net from skiffs performed better and is expected to substitute gillnets for this fishery. Test with finfish pods have not been very successful. Hence CIRVA recommended last year to form International Expert Panel to evaluate the design, and help with the implementation of a transparent full scale testing alternative fishing gear program. WWF-Mexico and INAPESCA (National Fisheries Institute) are executing this recommendation and already have an expert panel with scientist from the US, Canada, Denmark and Sweden.
- The first 4 years (2011-2014) of the Vaquita acoustic monitoring program were concluded. Result of this first full period show an 80% population decline.
- La Expedición Internacional Vaquita Marina 2015 took place during 64 days (September to December) and was subject of extensive international review. The survey design was reviewed and improved by an international panel of scientists named by the SMM and IWC SC Committee. A Webinar to discuss best design with the Expert Panel was chaired by Dr. Greg Donovan, Head of Science of the IWC.
- The total population estimate was 59, with a 95% chance of being between 22 and 145. So, about 60 vaquitas remain in the last third of 2015.
- In July 2016, the National Commissioner for Fisheries and Aquaculture announced a permanent ban on entangling nets (gillnets) that affect the vaquita, by spring 2017, a ban on

night fishing before the end of 2016 and a restriction on the docks fishermen can use in order to further aid enforcement.

- The Mexican Government made the announcement of a permanent ban on gillnets in the Upper Gulf of California gillnet exclusion zone from April 2017 and the program to remove derelict fishing gear in the Upper Gulf of California just started in early October 2016.