

MEXICO

Voluntary National Cetacean Conservation Report, 2010-2011 Lorenzo Rojas-Bracho

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)

- Mexican Standard 131 has been modified. It establishes guidelines and specifications for the development of whalewatching as related to the protection and conservation of whales and its habitat. Mexican Standards are reviewed very five years. Mexican Standards NOM-131 was registered in the Annual Programme for Standardization, for review and change. Experts in the theme from different areas have participated. Among the changes to the past NOM-131 we have:

- Establishes, if in need and according to scientific knowledge, restricted areas for the development of this activity.
- Established different maximum numbers of vessels that can do whalewatching at the same time.
- Dimishes the speed of vessels entering the whalewatching zone.
- A propeler protector is mandatory.
- Protección de las ballenas de los efectos negativos que pudiera causar el ruido, a través de la prohibición del uso de ecosondas y de la distancia y número de embarcaciones en la zona)
- Provide the necessary facilities for the elderly and people with different abilities to partici[ate in the whalewatching activities.

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.

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 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. Last year we reported that blue and humpback whales PACE were being developed. Both are currently under revision. 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).

For the latter 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)

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.
- A law enforcement program is in place coordinated by the Federal Attorney for Environmental Protection (PROFEPA). The number of infringements lifted for 2010 and 2011 was 45; The number of fishing nets, vessels and fishing product confiscated in 2010 and 2011: 169, 45 and 12,365 kg respectively; 86 sailors from the Mexican Navy supported enforcement in 2010. However in 2011 only 14 were available. Illegal fishing continues to happen and more effort is needed in this issue.
- CONAPESCA assess all fishing licenses and permits
- Experiments with alternative fishing gear (suriperas and changos) took place and of the two gears tested only the "chango" a small type of trawling net from skiffs performed better but still is not optimal. Test with finfish pods were successful last year. New test are expected.
- A public awareness and environmental education program is going on together with the State Governments of Baja California and Federal Government.
- 700 illegal pangas have been kept out from any fishing activities.
- 246 pangas were bought-out.
- 250 pangas have changed to permits to use the new fishing gears.
- A plan to rebuild a shrimp farm- 180 fishing boats will be retired. Slow progress in this strategy due to permits.
- Vaquita acoustic monitoring scheme to detect population trends is in its second stage and the full scheme will start by September this year.

The marine management plans for the Gulf of Mexico and the Mexico's North Pacific are being developed. These will contemplate shipstrikes mitigation measures.

Shipstrikes

There is planned research between Mexico's National Institute of Ecology and the US National Marine Fisheries Service, Southwest Fisheries Science Centre, to study the fine scale space use of gray whale's migration routes, using satellite telemetry, and to be able to assess spatial risk to design shipping lanes.