

31st Annual Meeting, 1979
(Rep. int. Whal. Commn 30)

IWC Resolution 1979-4
Bering Sea Bowhead Whales

WHEREAS IT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE International Whaling Commission to provide for the effective conservation and management of whale stocks,

WHEREAS the Commission also recognizes the importance of accommodating the needs of aboriginal people who are dependent upon whales for subsistence and cultural purposes,

WHEREAS three expert panels were assembled by the Technical Committee of the International Whaling Commission in Seattle, Washington, USA, the week of February 5, 1979, in order to provide the factual basis for the development of an aboriginal whaling regime for the take of the Bering Sea stock of bowhead whales by Alaskan Eskimos,

WHEREAS the United States has demonstrated its continued ability and willingness to conduct research and effectively to regulate aboriginal whaling in cooperation with the aborigines of the United States and thereby to conserve the Bering Sea stock of bowhead whales while permitting aboriginal whaling,

WHEREAS the Commission believes it appropriate to establish guidelines for the management of the Bering Sea stock of bowhead whales which recognize both conservation and subsistence needs,

NOW THEREFORE, THE COMMISSION HEREBY RESOLVES as follows:

The Commission agrees to institute a regime such as that recommended by the Technical Committee Working Group on Aboriginal/Subsistence Whaling which met in Washington, D.C., April 3 - 5, 1979 (IWC/31/5/WG 1), to be implemented following completion of scientific analysis and when the stock will not be subjected to undue risk. The Commission will review this proposal for a regime, the scientific analysis, and the status of the Bering Sea bowhead stock at its Annual Meeting in 1981.

THE COMMISSION INTENDS that the needs of the aboriginals of the United States shall be determined by the Government of the United States of America. This need shall be documented annually to the Technical Committee, and shall be based upon the following factors:

1. importance of the bowhead in the traditional diet,
2. possible adverse effects of shifts to non—native foods,
3. availability and acceptability of other food sources,
4. historical take
5. the integrative functions of the bowhead hunt in contemporary Eskimo society, and the risk to the community identity from an imposed restriction on native harvesting of the bowhead; and
6. to the extent possible, ecological considerations.

THE COMMISSION UNDERSTANDS that the Government of the United States will adopt a National Management Plan which shall contain the following characteristics:

- (1) it must annually establish a maximum permissible level of whales to be harvested,
- (2) it must establish requirements for the reporting and for the providing of data as mandated by the Schedule,
- (3) it must contain sufficient flexibility to permit quotas to be reduced immediately if, as a result of research and monitoring programs, the United States determines that the level of harvest is preventing the stocks

from recovering to the optimum population levels,

- (4) it must contain a provision which allows a lowering of the struck but lost quota if improved hunting efficiency or technology justifies a reduction in the number,
- (5) it must contain a research plan which has the following characteristics:
 - (a) it must be implemented at a sufficient level of effort to produce a reliable estimate of stock size and/or net recruitment rate in five years,
 - (b) it must provide annual calf counts and direct measurements of the size composition of the population throughout its range, if possible,
 - (c) it must monitor trends in abundance of the entire population through direct annual counts using procedures that will provide comparable results between years,
 - (d) it must provide for continuance of research even after the establishment of both net recruitment and population size to assure continued monitoring of the population as long as the stock remains a Protected Stock.

THE COMMISSION EXPECTS that the United States shall submit an annual report on the complete results of its research,

THE COMMISSION URGES the Government of the United States to continue to take appropriate steps to improve the efficiency of the bowhead whale hunt and to ensure full utilization of all whales taken,

THE COMMISSION REQUESTS the United States to submit appropriate information

on a timely basis in order to permit the Scientific Committee, and thereafter the Commission, to review and make such determinations as may be appropriate with regard to the following:

- (1) scientific data supporting the United States determination of its removal levels,
- (2) the research and management program of the Government of the United States,

THE COMMISSION RETAINS the authority to take emergency action if an unforeseen circumstance should create an imminent threat to the bowhead whale population, and,

THE COMMISSION will review this resolution at its Annual Meeting in 1981.