



NEWS FROM NOAA

NATIONAL OCEANIC & ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION • US DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

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U.S., 24 OTHER COUNTRIES, AND EUROPEAN COMMISSION PROTEST ICELAND'S RETURN TO WHALING

The United States, 24 other countries, and the European Commission have delivered a protest to Iceland's government urging it to reconsider its decision to start commercial whaling and halt its ongoing whaling operations.

"The fact that 25 countries and the European Commission created such a strongly worded protest demonstrates the breadth of opposition to Icelandic commercial whaling," said Dr. Bill Hogarth, U.S. Commissioner to the IWC and director of the NOAA Fisheries Service. "We're extremely disappointed that Iceland has decided to resume commercial whaling in spite of the international ban and absent any agreed upon management system. Its actions undermine the proper functioning of the International Whaling Commission."

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is the federal agency of the Commerce Department in charge of managing whales and other marine mammals in U.S. waters.

The United States supports the current IWC moratorium banning commercial whaling but has participated in all negotiations to establish a new system for regulating whaling should the moratorium end. The ban has been in place since 1986.

On October 17, Iceland announced it was resuming commercial whaling for the first time in two decades and would issue permits to hunt nine fin whales and 30 minke whales. Since then, Icelandic whalers have killed seven fin whales and one minke whale.

On October 18, U.S. Commerce Secretary Carlos Gutierrez issued a statement on Iceland's resumption of commercial whaling, calling the move "disappointing" and that "Iceland is going in the wrong direction on the issue." Shortly thereafter, the U.S. Ambassador to Iceland expressed U.S. displeasure directly to the Icelandic Fisheries Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The United Kingdom's ambassador to Iceland delivered the joint diplomatic protest on November 1 on behalf of the 25 countries and European Commission.

The diplomatic protest, formally known as a demarche, was signed by Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Chile, the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Luxembourg, Mexico, Monaco, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Peru, Portugal, the Slovak Republic, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States, together with the European Commission.

The United States has strongly and repeatedly objected to Iceland's lethal research whaling program, conducted since 2003. Under the Pelly Amendment to the U.S. Fishermen's Protective Act of 1967, the Secretary of Commerce certifies to the President that "nationals of a foreign country... are conducting fishing operations in a manner or under circumstances which diminish the effectiveness of an international fishery conservation program."

In 2004, then-Commerce Secretary Donald Evans certified Iceland as a country that is undermining the effectiveness of the whaling convention and the IWC through its scientific whaling. That certification remains active.

Minke and fin whales are protected under the U.S. Marine Mammal Protection Act, and fin whales are on the U.S. endangered species list. Furthermore, the hunts for minke and fin whales will be conducted without any transparency about Iceland's compliance measures, enforcement activities, or other management measures in place to ensure their quotas are not exceeded.

The Commerce Department's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events, and providing environmental stewardship of America's coastal and marine resources.

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