

U.S. Commissioner to the IWC and to the IWC Interagency Committee. Consistent with these responsibilities, NOAA develops positions for implementation of the aboriginal/subsistence harvest of bowhead whales under paragraph 13 of the Schedule to the International Convention on the Regulation of Whaling, December 2, 1946, 62 Stat. 1716, T.I.A.S. No. 1849 (entered into force, November 10, 1948).

In order to provide for review and comment by the public of the data upon which the U.S. positions are based, the following information is provided: (1) The IWC catch level available for the U.S. aboriginal/subsistence bowhead whale harvest for 1995-98; (2) a summary of available bowhead scientific information, including estimates of current population level and annual recruitment rates; (3) a summary of information on the nature and extent of aboriginal/subsistence need; (4) the level of aboriginal/subsistence harvest limits that could be implemented domestically; and (5) notice of the availability of those documents reviewed by NOAA and relied on by the Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere in making his finding on the range of harvest limits. NOAA is soliciting public comment on the proposed domestic implementation of the IWC bowhead whale catch limit.

1. Catch Level

At the 46th Annual Meeting of the IWC in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, May 23-27, 1994, the following catch limit was established for aboriginal/subsistence whaling:

For the years 1995, 1996, 1997, and 1998, the number of bowhead whales landed shall not exceed 204, and the number of bowhead whales struck shall not exceed 68 in 1995, 67 in 1996, 66 in 1997, and 65 in 1998, except that any unused portion of the strike quota for each year shall be carried forward from that year and added to the strike quota of any subsequent years, provided that no more than 10 strikes shall be added to the strike quota for any 1 year.

It was clarified on the floor of the meeting that if 15 of the allowed strikes were not used in 1 year, 10 of those strikes could be carried over to the next year and the remaining 5 strikes could be added to another year.

2. Scientific Information

At the 1994 Annual Meeting of the IWC, an assessment of the status of bowhead whales was completed using a series of relative abundance estimates and an absolute abundance from acoustic and visual survey data collected in 1988. The resulting analysis

suggested that the population currently is increasing at 3.1 percent annually (95 percent confidence interval 1.4 percent to 4.7 percent), is at 36 percent of its pre-exploitation abundance (95 percent confidence interval 0.27-0.44), and has a median value for the replacement yield of 199 (95 percent probability interval 97-300). A minimum replacement yield was estimated to be 104 animals per year; 104 is the fifth percentile replacement yield of the replacement yield distribution. Projections of population size under three levels of takes were made, suggesting that the population likely would increase at recent levels of aboriginal catches. Major uncertainties identified included: (1) Completing the analysis of the acoustic survey data from 1993, (2) methods of correcting visual sighting data for distribution away from the sighting location, (3) prior distributions for several input parameters, and (4) the degree of genetic interchange between this stock and other more depleted stocks of bowhead whales.

3. Aboriginal/Subsistence Need

In 1994, in response to a **Federal Register** document soliciting comments on a proposed U.S. position, the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission (AEWC) submitted a recalculation of the aboriginal subsistence and cultural need for 9 whaling villages using estimated populations for 1992 provided by the State Demographer of Alaska. Based on the 1992 estimated populations, the calculated need for bowhead whales in those 9 whaling villages was 50.

At the 1994 Annual Meeting of the IWC, the United States sought IWC recognition that the island of Little Diomed has a subsistence and cultural need to land 1 bowhead whale per year. Together with the 50 bowheads needed for the other whaling villages, the total needed is 51. Assuming a target efficiency rate of 75 percent, this would require a quota of 68 strikes.

In setting a limit of 204 bowhead whales landed for 4 years (an average of 51 animals per year), the United States believes that the IWC implicitly acknowledged the subsistence and cultural need of Little Diomed to land 1 bowhead whale per year.

4. Domestic Harvest Range

The IWC management scheme for aboriginal/subsistence whaling provides (in Schedule paragraph 13(a)(2)):

For stocks below the maximum sustainable yield (MSY) level but above a certain minimum level, aboriginal/subsistence catches shall be permitted so long as they are

set at levels which allow whale stocks to move to the MSY level.

Given the above-stated minimum estimate of replacement yields of 104, an aboriginal/subsistence catch can be permitted in 1995.

Therefore, the catch limits for bowhead whales in 1995 shall be such that no more than a total of 68 bowhead whales are struck. For the years 1995 to 1998 combined, the number of bowhead whales landed shall not exceed 204.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 916, 1361-1407, 1531-43.

Dated: May 11, 1995.

Gary Matlock,

Program Management Officer, National Marine Fisheries Service.

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COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS

Agenda and Notice of Public Meeting of the South Carolina Advisory Committee

Notice is hereby given, pursuant to the provisions of the rules and regulations of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, that a meeting of the South Carolina meeting to the Commission will convene at 10:00 a.m. and adjourn at 1:00 p.m. on Friday, June 2, 1995, at the Adams Mark Inn, Meeting Room, 1200 Hampton Street (Downtown), Columbia, South Carolina. The purpose of the meeting is to release the report, *Perceptions of Racial Tensions in South Carolina*; discuss civil rights progress and/or problems in the State; and discuss future project plans.

Persons desiring additional information, or planning a presentation to the Committee, should contact Bobby D. Doctor, Director of the Southern Regional Office, 404-730-2476 (TDD 404-730-2481). Hearing-impaired persons who will attend the meeting and require the services of a sign language interpreter should contact the Regional Office at least five (5) working days before the scheduled date of the meeting.

The meeting will be conducted pursuant to the provisions of the rules and regulations of the Commission.

Dated at Washington, DC, May 4, 1995.

Carol-Lee Hurley,

Chief, Regional Programs Coordination Unit.

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