From: Kristen Higdon
To: MakahDEIS.nwr@noaa.gov;
Date: Thursday, May 29, 2008 5:58:52 AM

NOAA's Fisheries Service:

Thank you for accepting public opinion on the Makah Indian Tribe's February 2005 appeal to recommence hunting Pacific gray whales in coastal waters off Washington State. I understand the Draft EIS weighs a range of options to the tribe's proposal to kill whales.

I respectfully ask you to consider this fact: In the 21st Century, no human being needs whale meat to survive -- including the Makah Tribe, who until recently, left the gray whale alone for over 70 years.

The "reinforcement of tribal identity" does not justify slaughter. Whales are typically harpooned or blasted with high-powered rifles under the guise of cultural whaling. Holidays are observed with whaling contests and races. No celebration warrants animal suffering and death.

After five Makah whalers illegally shot and harpooned a gray whale off Neah Bay in 2007, the animal gradually bled to death over nine hours. The Makah Nation dismissed all charges, as long as the offenders violated no laws for the next year. Federal prosecutors offered a plea deal that asked the tribal court to waive prosecution. As you know, the tribal judge ignored the federal plea deal, ordering the five whalers to instead stand trial in a sympathetic Makah courtroom.

This is unacceptable -- for the Neah Bay whale and others who will suffer prolonged death at the hands of Makah killers. Please do not honor "treaty rights" to massacre whales.

There is no rationale for "ceremonial and subsistence" whaling in the contemporary world. Please deny the Makah Nation's proposal to legally kill whales under their treaty.

Thank you,

Kristen N Higdon