From: Benjamin Menzies
To: MakahDEIS.nwr@noaa.gov;
Subject: Attn: 2008 Makah DEIS
Date: Sunday, May 11, 2008 1:11:06 PM

Dear Steve,

As a conservationist and non-native member of the public, I am in guarded support of the Makah peoples' rights and ability to kill and eat a gray whale or two every year within the limits set by the 1995 agreement.

After reading the DEIS I am persuaded that there is sufficient monitoring and oversight to keep the hunt from sustaining or stimulating international demand for whale products (my biggest concern).

But I do worry that whalers and their communities in places like Japan will be able to redefine themselves as "aboriginal" to take advantage of any loophole in the international moratorium on whaling, and I am also concerned that native people could become proxies for corporate/commercial whaling interests, allowing the abuse of tribal rights for commercial purposes. I know the report covers the latter issue, but I wonder if there isn't some way of monitoring exactly what sort of international precedent is set by the hunt--i.e. if a provision should be added that requires the monitoring of international court cases which reference the hunt as a precedent for allowing other whale hunts.

I also object to the Makah's at this point unsupported claims that eating whale meat would improve the health of tribe members who allegedly "need" whale meat due to genetically-ingrained dietary needs. Though the tensions between culture and genetics in native politics are often almost inextricably complex, in this instance a clear distinction between the two should be maintained.

Additionally, I'm not convinced that there is any economically-defined need to eat whales either, since at this point in time tribal housing, subsistence, foodways, lifestyles, desires for many of the same goods (cars, boats, TVs, etc.) and services (energy, education, health care, etc.) are irremediably "westernized" and linked to the same production and distribution networks as any other community in the US--impoverished or not. Though the whales may feed hungry people, and I understand some natives' desire for autonomy, I don't think that whale hunting is an appropriate way to address entrenched tribal poverty or hunger.

I'm most persuaded by the Makah's desire to shore up the tribe's cultural identity, establish a small degree of historical parity, and celebrate its unique history--as long as the hunt and its effects on the whale population are very

closely monitored.

For better or for worse, the tribe's effort to create or maintain a cultural identity distinct from the surrounding cultures of the state and nation is one thing the hunt will most definitely augment. The hunt is such a polarizing issue in the state, country, and world at large that non-native antipathy towards the tribe should have the internally-galvanizing effects on tribal identity the tribe seeks... though I'm unsure whether this benefit will offset the heightened hostility and outright racism directed towards the tribe and native North Americans in general. In any case, the tribe itself should obviously be free to decide on this particular issue.

Finally, one thing I did not see in the report that I wonder about are the impacts--either positive or negative--that culling this particular species of whale may have on other whale species. I would guess that maintaining a smaller number of Gray Whales may help other whale populations recover, but I wonder too if there are endangered species who depend in some way on these whales' migrations or feeding habits etc.

Thank you for your time,

Ben Menzies