From: Brennan Browne
To: MakahDEIS.nwr@noaa.gov;
Subject: NO to Makah Whaling
Date: Thursday, May 15, 2008 7:37:19 PM

I am outraged, fed-up and thoroughly disgusted that the Makah are about to be given another free pass [with my taxpayer money no less] to murder MORE whales...the 5 brazen, remorseless and swaggering loud-mouths that illegally killed the last Gray whale served no jail time, and will have to pay a big $20 fine--WHOA!...and from the looks of it, NOAA intends to reward this despicable behavior. NOAA should NOT be asking for public comment on more Makah whaling...they should be doing their job by following the law which states that as a signatory to the International Whaling Commission's MORATORIUM on whaling--NO U.S. CITIZEN IS ALLOWED TO WHALE--PERIOD. International law trumps treaty rights, especially since the Makah were refused any right to whale by the IWC, on the grounds that they do NOT QUALIFY FOR CULTURAL OR SUBSISTENCE status. Their so-called 'allotment' was illegally obtained through a back-room deal with the Russians.

The Makah have bribed Congress, Senator Patty Murray, former NOAA officials, The Dept. of Interior and wildlife officials to continue getting their way on this issue. Please review these facts:

~ U.S. taxpayers subsidize the Gray whale 'hunt'---not the Makah. Over 5 million dollars has been spent to date on whaling, with the Makah continuing to petition their 'favorite' Congressional contacts for more funds. Their latest request? A ship which would cost taxpayers ONE MILLION DOLLARS.

~ CONGRESSIONAL BRIBES PROMPT CONTINUED MAKAH WHALING. Former Republican Representative Richard Pombo received $221,000 + from tribes. In return, he pushed through a resolution which calls the waiver process required by the National Marine Fisheries Service "burdensome, costly and tantamount to a denial of the [Makah] tribe's treaty rights." The resolution goes on to urge Congress to express "its disapproval of the abrogation of the tribe's treaty rights, and that the government of the United States should uphold the treaty rights of the Makah Tribe." Pombo ranked third among all House members in terms of tribal donations.

~ The Makah have been refused permission to whale by the International Whaling Commission. They were denied because they do not fit the criteria for either 'cultural' or 'subsistence' whaling. The Makah circumvented the IWC's denial by using the political clout of then head of NOAA, D. James Baker, who brokered a back-room deal with the Russians which allowed the Makah to take a portion of the Russian Gray whale subsistence quota. The IWC, to this day, has NEVER given permission to the Makah to whale...IWC guidelines supercede Makah treaty whaling rights.

~ As a signatory of the International Whaling Commission's moratorium on whaling, the U.S. is breaking its own anti-whaling treaty agreement and international law by allowing the Makah to continue whaling.

~ Gray whales were removed from the Endangered Species List due to the political wrangling of the Makah--NOT VALID SCIENTIFIC STUDIES. Scientists have observed decreasing numbers of Gray whales each year and have serious concerns about the health of the population. Large numbers of gray whales have recently been discovered suffering from starvation. http://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2007-09/s-gwa090407.php

~ Several elders within the Makah tribe are AGAINST whaling and in favor of WHALE WATCHING to bring income into Makah coffers. Their voices should be heard. This is their appeal:

The whale hunt issue has never been brought to the [Makah] people to inform them,
and there is no spiritual training going on. We believe they, the [Makah] Council, will just shoot the whale, and we think the word "subsistence" is the wrong thing to say when our people haven't used or had whale meat/blubber since the early 1900's.

For these reasons we believe the hunt is only for the money. They can't say "Traditional, Spiritual and for Subsistence" in the same breath when no training is going on, just talk.

Whale watching is an alternative we support:

* Isabell Ides. Age 96

* Harry Claplonhoo. Age 78
* Margaret Irving. Age 80
* Ruth Claplanhoo. Age 94
* Viola Johnson. Age 88
* Alberta N Thompson. Age 72
* Lena McGee. Age 92.

~ The Makah Treaty of 1855; [specifically Article 4, which allows the tribe to whale], is a 152 year old document; one which pre-dates the AMERICAN CIVIL WAR BY 6 YEARS, and is therefore no longer relevant in a world where cetaceans now face overwhelming threats to their survival due to global warming, overfishing, ship strikes, sonar disturbances, pollution and disease. Slow reproductive rates and an unacceptably prolonged and cruel manner of slaughter dictate that cetaceans should be spared whaling in ANY form.

~ Makah cousins, members of the Maa-nulth First Nations, who reside on the Western shores of Vancouver Island have signed an agreement with the Canadian government in which they will honor a 25 year moratorium of their whaling rights. In return, they were given generous concessions of land and cash. If the Makah are genuinely interested in "honoring" whales, they must be committed to allowing them to live in peace and safety; while helping improve the quality of life for ALL Makah--not just the privileged few who never allow the majority a voice. The entire Makah tribe should be given a vote on what types of concessions they would want in lieu of forfeiting whaling.

Sincerely,
Brennan Browne