

WESTERN GRAY WHALE ADVISORY PANEL  
9<sup>th</sup> Meeting  
PUBLIC

WGWAP 9/Inf.3  
4-6 December 2010  
ENGLISH

**IWC Commissioners' letter to Russian MNR  
regarding Lebedinskoye seismic survey 2010**  
Prepared by: IWC Commissioners

Mr. Rinat R. Gizatulin  
The Director of Department for  
environment ecological safety State Policy  
Ministry of Natural Resources and  
Environment of The Russian Federation  
4\6, Bolshaya Gruzinskaya str, Moscow,  
123995, Russian Federation

Copied to: Dr. Valentin Ilyashenko  
Russian Federation Commissioner  
to the International Whaling Commission (IWC)

7 July 2010

**SUBJECT: Western Gray Whales and the potential impacts of Lebedinskoe seismic survey**

Dear Sir

We, the Governments and scientists of Australia, Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Mexico, Monaco, New Zealand, United Kingdom and the United States would like to thank the Government of the Russian Federation for its work to address the critically endangered Western Gray Whale (WGW) in the west Pacific Ocean and for the continued efforts to mitigate potential impacts on this population from oil and gas development.

We note the planned seismic survey scheduled for July 2010 off Sakhalin Island this year, coinciding with the critical period in the Western Gray Whales feeding season, and we welcome consideration of its postponement in line with the advice from the International Whaling Commission's (IWC) Scientific Committee and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Western Gray Whale Advisory Panel (WGWAP).

Only around 130 Western Gray Whales remain with a minimum of just 26 breeding females observed since 1995. A 3-D seismic survey (Rosneft Lebedenskoie) is scheduled to take place when the highest number of gray whales, including mothers and their calves, are present in the area. We understand that the survey will last through much of the critical time when calves are with their mothers.

The IWC Scientific Committee, at their June 2010 meeting, were "extremely concerned about the potential impact of this survey on Western Gray Whales" and strongly recommended that "Rosneft postpone their survey until at least June 2011". The Committee also recommended that "Rosneft use monitoring and mitigation measures similar to those used by Sakhalin Energy, which have been independently reviewed by experts, and that all energy companies operating in the feeding areas of

WGW should use comprehensive monitoring and mitigation measures to protect them.”

The WGWAP is “extremely concerned that the Lebedinskoe survey, without the kind of robust mitigation and monitoring planned for the Astokh survey, could seriously damage the survival and recovery of Western Gray Whales” and concluded that “postponement of the Lebedinskoe survey until at least 2011 is necessary and appropriate.”

We note with concern the critically endangered status of this population and welcome range states and companies continuing to engage with the Western Gray Whale Advisory Panel and the IWC Scientific Committee to look at ways to mitigate anthropogenic disturbance to this population.

Yours

*Donna Petrachenko*

**Australia Commissioner to the IWC**

*Andrea Nouak*

**Austria Commissioner to the IWC**

*Alexandre de Lichtervelde*

**Belgium Commissioner to the IWC**

*Stéphane Louhaur*

**France Commissioner to the IWC**

*Thomas Schmidt*

**Germany Commissioner to the IWC**

*Zoltan Czirak*

**Hungary Commissioner to the IWC**

*John Fitzgerald*

**Ireland Commissioner to the IWC**

*Lorenzo Rojas Bracho*

**Mexico Commissioner to the IWC**

*Frederic Briand*

**Monaco Commissioner to the IWC**

*Sir Geoffrey Palmer*

**New Zealand Commissioner to the IWC**

*Nigel Gooding*

**United Kingdom Commissioner to the IWC**

*Monica Medina*

**United States Commissioner to the IWC**