



**The International Whaling Commission (IWC) is the global administrative body that governs the conservation and management of whales. Here in, a brief history of the 64-year old Commission.**

1946 - The International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling (ICRW) is drafted and signed. The Convention is “to provide for the conservation of whale stocks and thus make possible the orderly development of the whaling industry.” The operative component of the Convention is the Schedule, which is where quotas, seasons, regulations, methods, sanctuaries, inspections and information requirements are laid out.

1948 – ICRW takes effect.

1949 – The IWC is created under the ICRW to bring order to the whaling industry, which was continuing to kill whales at an unsustainable rate. The fifteen original member countries were Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Mexico, Netherlands, Norway, Panama, South Africa, Soviet Union, United Kingdom and United States. Most of the original members were whaling nations. Any nation can join the Commission by signing the ICRW treaty.

The Commission claims competency for regulating large cetaceans (baleen and sperm), but does not claim competency for regulating small cetaceans. The Commission meets annually with the Scientific Committee meeting for two weeks, followed by a week of preliminary meetings leading up to the week-long Plenary. The Scientific Committee, comprised of over 200 scientists, gives recommendations and advice to the Commission on worldwide whale stocks.

1951 – Japan joins the IWC. Since joining the Commission, Japan has consistently worked against the establishment of all conservation measures for whales.

1961 – Highest known number of whales killed in one year – 66,000.

1979 – The IWC agrees to a moratorium on factory ship whaling (with an exception for minke) and the Indian Ocean Whale Sanctuary is established.

1982 – The Commission adopts a moratorium on commercial whaling – a zero catch limit is set in the Schedule for all commercial whaling. To this day, the moratorium stands as the single most important conservation measure for whales ever adopted by the IWC. Norway files formal objection to the moratorium (which must be done within 90 days of a decision by the Commission), thus legally exempting itself. Japan and the Soviet Union also filed objections, but Japan withdrew their objection.

1986 – The moratorium on commercial whaling implemented.

1987/8 – Japan begins Special Permit whaling in Antarctica. This so-called “scientific research” whaling allows for the taking of lactating females, calves and undersized whales; operating outside of seasonal limits; whaling in protected areas like sanctuaries; and inhumane killing of whales.

1992 – Iceland leaves the IWC.

1993 – Norway resumes commercial whaling under objection to moratorium.

1994 - The Southern Ocean Whale Sanctuary is established. The Revised Management Procedure (RMP), which is the scientific system for setting catch limits, is approved by the Commission, but not formally adopted into the Schedule. The RMP is only one component of the Revised Management Scheme (RMS), which would contain the rules and regulations that need to be followed once the moratorium on commercial whaling is lifted.

1996 – Japan begins Special Permit whaling in North Pacific.

2002 – Iceland rejoins IWC and files a reservation to the commercial moratorium reserving its right to conduct sustainable whaling.

2003 - Conservation Committee established to further address emerging environmental and anthropogenic issues and threats facing whales -including climate change, chemical and noise pollution, marine debris, ship strikes and entanglements – which are now part of the Scientific Committee’s work.

2006 – Iceland resumes commercial whaling.

2007 – A resolution recognizing the scientific and socio-economic benefits of non-lethal and non-consumptive use of cetacean resources is passed by the Commission opening the door for whale watching to be monitored by the IWC to ensure sustainability and best management practices.

2008 – Iceland and Norway export whale meat to Japan despite the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) ban on international trade in whale products.

2012 – At the 64<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the IWC in Panama, the Commission votes to move Plenary to a biennial schedule. Scientific Committee will continue to meet annually. Greenland’s request for an increased quota for its indigenous people is voted down. South Korea announces intent to take minke whales by special permit at the IWC meeting in Panama, but never submits formal proposal to the Commission by December deadline.

2013 – IWC membership consists of 89 nations, more than double the membership in 1986, when the moratorium on commercial whaling went into effect.

**For more information on the IWC, visit the Commission’s website at <http://iwc.int/>**

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