



California Ocean Protection Council

Minutes

June 16, 2010

9:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.

Sacramento

California Natural Resources Agency
Agency Conference Room, Room 1305
1416 Ninth Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Los Angeles

State Controller's Office
777 South Figueroa St., Suite 4800
Los Angeles, CA 90017

Bay Area

State Coastal Conservancy
11th Floor Conference Room
1330 Broadway
Oakland, CA 94612

San Diego

Scripps Institution of Oceanography
Martin Johnson House (T-29)
8840 Biological Grade
La Jolla, CA 92037

Council Members in Attendance:

Lester Snow, Secretary for the Natural Resources, Council Chair (Sacramento)
Cindy Tuck, Deputy Secretary, for Linda Adams, Secretary for Environmental Protection (Sacramento)
John Chiang, State Controller, Chair of the State Lands Commission (Sacramento)
*Cindy Aronberg, representative for John Chiang (Los Angeles)
Fran Pavley, State Senator (Sacramento)
Pedro Nava, State Assemblymember (Sacramento)
Susan Golding, Public Member (San Diego)

Absent:

Geraldine Knatz, Public Member

1. Secretary Snow opened the meeting and stated the purpose of the meeting was to discuss a proposal being considered by the International Whaling Commission (IWC) at a meeting on June 21-25, 2010. He noted that it was important for California to weigh in on this issue of international concern, and in particular for OPC to weigh in on the policy issue. Secretary Snow introduced the draft letter from the OPC opposing commercial whaling, stating the need to strengthen and reform the IWC to be more effective, and underscoring the need for a sound actionable science-based monitoring program. Secretary Snow noted that Amber Mace would present the issue, and Council Members would then have an opportunity to make any statements they wished to make. Public comment would follow at each location.

2. Dr. Amber Mace, Executive Director of OPC, presented a brief background on the IWC and the “Proposed Consensus Decision to Improve the Conservation of Whales from the Chair and Vice Chair of the Commission” that the IWC will be voting on at its June Meeting in Morocco. Twenty-four years ago, the IWC agreed on a ban to stop whaling, but three countries (Japan, Norway, and Iceland) still continue whaling using loopholes. The IWC proposal immediately caps the quotas of the three countries to a number determined to be scientifically sustainable for a ten year period and would shift the focus of the IWC to the conservation of whales. Dr. Mace stated that the proposal legitimizes the loopholes used by the three countries by allowing a ten year period of whaling quotas. Mace outlined the three main points of the draft OPC letter to President Obama: 1) OPC strongly opposes commercial and scientific whaling, 2) OPC strongly supports strengthening IWC as an international body to protect the world’s whales, and 3) OPC strongly supports monitoring of whales and enforcement of regulations for their protection.

Council-member comments:

Senator Pavley thanked the Council for hearing this issue on short notice and expressed the importance of the issue for California and globally. Senator Pavley noted a few areas of concern: 1) the inability of IWC to have a management plan that includes monitoring and enforcement for whale protection and 2) the IWC’s acceptance of bribes is troubling. Senator Pavley expressed that the Obama administration supports the IWC plan, so the OPC needs to raise the issue that the quotas are unenforceable.

Susan Golding joined the meeting from San Diego.

Assemblymember Nava thanked Senator Pavley for taking a leadership role on this issue and expressed that ship strikes, bycatch, disease, offshore oil, and sonar use by military are all threats to the whale populations. He announced that he had joined Assembly member Huffman to send a letter to the IWC to object to any allowance of whaling. He expressed that the practice of exploiting loopholes to allow killing of whales is not to be supported, and emphasis on whaling at the IWC should be replaced with emphasis on conservation of the whale populations.

John Chiang joined the meeting in Sacramento and supported the idea that the OPC take the action of sending a letter.

Susan Golding expressed the importance of a whaling ban given all of the other impacts to the environment and marine species by humans. She expressed that she did not support lifting the ban on whaling, especially when the votes are questionable.

Cindy Tuck suggested that the phrase “in the face of broad scientific uncertainty” in the last paragraph was not necessary and could be deleted. Amber Mace concurred.

Public Comment:

- Sarah Christie, the Legislative Representative at the California Coastal Commission (CCC) thanked the OPC for holding the meeting and thanked Senator Pavley, John Chiang, and Assemblymember Nava for supporting the letter. She announced that the CCC passed a resolution at its May meeting in opposition to the IWC proposal that called for strengthening the protection of whales. She also noted the following regarding the IWC and its proposal: the IWC proposal repeats that it maintains the moratorium on whaling,

however it can't set quotas if it is maintaining the moratorium; the catch quotas proposed are still under debate and have not been determined to be scientifically sustainable; corruption and bribery at IWC is not confined to commissioners, but also to observers on vessels who are underreporting catches by 10%; monitoring called for in the IWC proposal appears to support taking of pregnant whales, which is not consistent with support for protection of an endangered species.. Sarah Christie expressed that the CCC is opposed to the current IWC proposal and is also opposed to the continuation of scientific whaling that is occurring. She also expressed that the U.S. can do more by employing trade barriers from countries that conduct whaling.

- Al Wanger from the California Coastal Commission supported the comments of his colleague. Wanger noted that the time period of ten years was too long and twice as long as any precedents from the IWC. He encouraged the OPC to strongly suggest a five year period if the proposal is adopted.
- Joel Reynolds from the Natural Resources Defense Council supported the OPC letter, but requested that the letter include a stronger statement that the OPC oppose the Consensus statement. He expressed that the quotas were a step backward because 38,000 whales were killed a year in 1986, and now we are down to 1,200 a year. The current consensus statement would not further reduce the numbers of whale mortalities and is a misguided approach to address the whaling problem.

The Council members debated opposing the consensus statement as a whole. They discussed that the OPC is strongly opposed to any whaling, but that the consensus statement contained some efforts to improve the IWC and scientific monitoring. Additionally, Council members Golding and Nava noted that the opposition to whaling should be for all ocean waters, instead of specifically mentioning California in the draft letter.

The following substantive modifications were requested to be made to the letter:

- #1 was revised to "The OPC strongly opposes commercial and scientific whaling anywhere in the world's oceans. For that reason, we support maintaining the commercial moratorium on whaling that has been in place for 24 years."
- The last paragraph was revised to "In conclusion, it is the strong contention of the OPC that commercial and scientific whaling would do irrevocable harm to vital populations of whale species. The proposed consensus statement must address the three points stated in this letter. We urge the Administration to continue to take a leadership role within the IWC and consider the OPC's recommendations to protect these species now and into the future."

The motion to approve the revised letter was moved (Chiang) and seconded (Golding).

APPROVED Ayes: Snow, Nava, Pavley, Tuck Nays: 0

3. Secretary Snow adjourned the meeting at 9:53 am.