

Issues That Affect Whales

What if. . .

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- What if a Navy project designed to detect enemy submarines has the potential to deafen every marine mammal? It does! Low Frequency Active (LFA) Sonar is an experimental sonar system that the Navy is now using throughout 80 percent of the world's oceans. Many marine mammals and other sea life are dependent on their sensitive hearing to communicate with their mates and young, find food, and follow migration routes. What if the military was exempt from environmental laws that protect sensitive marine mammals from sonar testing? It may happen! The Pentagon has requested a blanket exemption from the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA). Learn more:
 - [Earth Justice News Article: Distressed Whales Highlight Potential Impacts of Exempting Military from Environmental Laws](#)
 - [Environment News Service](#) (Do a search for LFA Sonar)
- What if pollution in the ocean and air is contaminating marine mammals? It is! Although most of us do not associate contaminants with the Alaskan environment, recent work has indicated that
- PCBs and DDTs are present in Alaskan food chains. The transient orcas around Kodiak, Alaska, for example, have some of the highest contaminants of any marine mammal sampled in the world. Contaminants from World War 2 dump sites and U.S.-banned pesticides are raining down on us from Asia. The contaminants "load" in these top predators. How do researchers study the "Kodiak Killers" (a term coined by North Gulf Oceanic Society researcher, Craig Matkin), and what have they learned? Will gray whales be affected along with killer whales? Find out more:
 - [North Gulf Oceanic Society](#)
 - [Whales in Sound Imperiled \(Anchorage Daily News story\)](#)
- What if cruise ships were exempt from the Clean Water Act? They are! These huge vessels discharge about 50,000 gallons of raw sewage a day per ship -- and it goes straight into the ocean. How does it affect not only marine creatures like gray whales, but also the beaches where people vacation? Learn more:
 - [Bluewater Network](#) (Links to relevant news articles)
 - [Blues Cruise Interview with Ross Klein \(Savvy Traveler radio show\)](#)
 - [Information About the Cruise Industry: cruisejunkiedotcom](#)
 - [Cruise Ship Blues](#)
- What if natural gas industries and tourism want to build in or near the birthing and calving grounds or migration route of the gray whales? On Feb. 01, 2003 Baja California residents voiced fears (fireballs, tanker collisions with whales, the destruction of a unique cactus species) about proposals to build liquefied natural gas terminals on Baja California's Costa Azul.
- What if gray whales were hunted and killed again, which caused them to become endangered? In some places, they are! At its 2002 annual meeting,

the International Whaling Commission (IWC) approved a quota of 620 gray whales for an aboriginal subsistence harvest for the years 2003 through 2007. The basis for the quota was a joint request by the Russian Federation (for a total of 600 whales) and the United States (for a total of 20 whales). The subsistence and ceremonial needs of the Makah Indian Tribe were the foundation of the United States' request to the IWC. On December 20, 2002, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals reversed a district court ruling that upheld NMFS' issuance of a quota to the Makah Tribe to hunt a limited number of gray whales for aboriginal subsistence purposes in 2001 and 2002. See *Anderson v. Evans*, 314 F.3d 1006 (9th Cir. 2002). The Federal Government is currently considering whether to request rehearing of *Anderson v. Evans*. Subject to the outcome of a possible rehearing, NMFS is preparing an EIS on the issuance of annual quotas to the Makah Tribe for a subsistence hunt on gray whales for the years 2003 through 2007. NMFS is evaluating four alternatives:

Alternative 1 - Grant the Makah Tribe a quota of 5 whales per year over 5 years through annual quotas with restrictions that would allow a limited hunt on the gray whale summer feeding aggregation and limit the harvest to 20 landed whales over 5 years.

Alternative 2 - Grant the Makah Tribe a quota of 5 whales per year over 5 years through annual quotas with restrictions to target the hunt on migrating whales and limit the harvest to 20 landed whales over 5 years.

Alternative 3 - Grant the Makah Tribe a quota of 5 whales per year over 5 years through annual quotas without time or area restrictions. The hunt would be limited to 20 landed whales over 5 years.

Alternative 4 - (No Action) - Do not grant the Makah Tribe a quota.

A Web search can help you find out the latest news on whale hunting.

- What if people who own large ships gave money to help study issues that affect marine mammals? Some did! The Ocean Fund of Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd. awarded \$480,750 in seven new grants to marine conservation organizations in January 2003. The money goes to various organizations working to protect the marine environment. The seven latest grants, ranging from \$12,000 to \$100,000 annually, will support projects related to research in coral disease, deaths of whales and dolphins from fishing-net entanglement, protection of sea turtles, and marine science education.