



The Society for Marine Mammalogy

<http://www.marinemammalogy.org>

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Position Statement for the COP-13 Convention on Biological Diversity

The Society for Marine Mammalogy expresses its urgent concern that the vaquita, a porpoise species found only in Mexico's Gulf of California, will be extinct in a few years unless deaths in an illegal gillnet fishery are immediately and permanently halted.

The vaquita (*Phocoena sinus*) now numbers less than 60 individuals and is declining at 30-50% per year due to a gillnet fishery for an endangered fish species, the totoaba. Totoaba swim bladders are highly prized in Chinese markets, where they are traded openly. The Government of Mexico has banned all gillnet fishing within the range of the vaquita and has called on its Navy to enforce this ban. Mexico is spending over US\$30M per year to compensate local fishermen for income lost due to the gillnet ban. Despite these heroic efforts by Mexico to save the vaquita, populations are still declining precipitously.

More must be done. The Society for Marine Mammalogy calls on the international community to aid Mexico in their fight to save this species from imminent extinction. Illegal fishing in Mexico is being fueled by international trade which must be stopped. Biodiversity is lost one species at a time. If we cannot stop the extinction of a large mammal, what hope do we have for saving less loved species?

Jay Barlow,
President, Society for Marine Mammalogy