From: Mary WilAllen
To: MakahDEIS.nwr@noaa.gov;
cc: Mary WillAllen;
Subject: 2008 Makah DEIS
Date: Friday, August 15, 2008 2:39:29 PM

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135 Quail Crossing Road
Friday Harbor, WA 98250
August 15, 2008

Steve Stone

Dear Mr. Stone,

I am writing to encourage you (and I mean "to bring courage") as you make decisions regarding Makah whaling. The petition to resume whaling argues that it is for "ceremonial and subsistence purposes."

SUBSISTENCE

A group of Makah elders addressed this subject much more directly than I would have, saying: "We think the word 'subsistence' is the wrong thing to say when our people haven't used or had whale meat-blubber since the early 1900s…. We believe the hunt is only for money."

Far more money, as well as good will, would be generated from developing whale-watching and eco-tours. The gray whale that was last killed in an official hunt was swimming only a mile and a half from shore, as gray whales usually do. Because they tend to approach boats with curiosity and great interest (and without fear, since they have not been hunted here since 1946), gray whales make perfect subjects for whale watching. Humpback whale watching in Hawaii brings in more than thirty million dollars a year.

CEREMONY

The last (organized) whale hunt exemplified little regard for ceremony, particularly in practicing respect for the whale through traditions as seemingly onerous as staying up all night praying for the recently killed whale. The whalers didn't even stick around to do the butchering, or to participate in it. Robert Sullivan from National Marine Fisheries was the only person willing to step in when the hired butcher asked for

assistance.

TRADITION

The Makah are asking to harvest whales using modern technology. In the last official kill, the U.S. Coast Guard retrieved the whale, which had sunk to the sea floor. Tradition was and is not an issue to those who want to resume whaling. It could be, though. In 1915, when European whalers had decimated the gray whale population, it was the Makah tribe, before anyone else, who recognized the need to stop killing in the hope that gray whales would recover. While considerable recovery is unfolding, gray whales are not yet secure enough for Makah to consider taking from their numbers. Not only have they suffered inexplicable declines, as great as thirty per cent recently, but also there are very small populations among the gray whales, which are local, and are far too small to consider safe to diminish purposely. One that returns from Mexico only to Puget Sound is no greater than 10 members; another group of around 250 is also considered a "resident" population. Unless the Makah are able to distinguish from among the varying populations, as sone scientists can, what tradition would risk destroying such small but intact populations? The Makah tradition here is one of restoring, not of destroying.

RIGHTS, and WHO GETS TO BE HEARD

If you asked the women of the tribe, the discussion would be over. They are not for quick fixes.

I suspect that white people of government employ are responding to the demands of young people who have lost some of the deeper perspectives of their culture—entirely the fault of whites over long periods of history—wanting to say "yes, you can hunt" because, indeed, young men of the Makah tribe are restless and in great need of the constraints and spiritual fulfillment that their culture used to offer them through the discipline of The Hunt. Honor, Respect, Courage,--these do not come from killing but from diligent growth in discipline. By handing over to these young men the right to decimate an already struggling species, and a very friendly and trusting one, white people are burdening them with a wrong that they will not be able to right when they finally grow up. We know better; throwing in five whales a year to be slaughtered for their boisterous entertainment (as demonstrated previously) and for quick money will do nothing for them nor for the tribe we are perhaps attempting to help. Having the courage to say "NO" is the

only help we can offer in an official capacity.

CONCLUSION

I beg you to listen to scientists regarding the fragility of this species.
I beg you to find out what the Makah really want and help them find it in constructive ways. These are the difficult solutions. The easy one is just to say "yes." You, too, will not be able to rectify that mistake in your lifetime here. This is your opportunity to stand on the side of courage.

Sincerely,

Mary WillAllen
Friday Harbor, Washington