



Sr. Enrique Peña Nieto  
Presidente Constitucional de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos  
Presidencia de la República,  
Residencia Oficial de los Pinos  
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México

18 December, 2012

Dear Mr. President,

The Society for Marine Mammalogy (SMM), the European Cetacean Society (ECS) and the Society for Conservation Biology (SCB) would like to congratulate you on being elected President of Mexico in the past elections. We also wish to express to you our grave concern regarding the plight of the vaquita porpoise (*Phocoena sinus*). Together, these three societies have 7,190 members (SMM = 1,920; ECS = 476; SCB = 4,794). These scientists are from many countries and are dedicated to the study, understanding, and conservation of living resources and their ecosystems.

The past Government's Secretaría del Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales (SEMARNAT) took critical steps to prevent the immediate extinction of Mexico's vaquita porpoise through an integrated recovery program. This impressive effort reduced the number of artisanal boats in the Biosphere Reserve of the Upper Gulf of California and Colorado River Delta by almost one third. However, these efforts have only slowed the vaquita's decline toward extinction. The incessant use of gillnets in the vaquita's distribution area not only continues to prevent recovery, but also results in an ongoing slow decline. Recent scientific studies have re-affirmed that the only strategy that will ensure the vaquita's survival is to remove all gillnets from its range.

Successful testing of small trawls, developed by Mexico's National Institute of Fisheries (INAPESCA), to replace the vaquita-lethal gillnets for blue shrimp provides a long-awaited alternative that would allow local fishermen to continue pursuing their primary source of income while saving the lives of many vaquitas. With only about 200 vaquitas left,

we concur with the 2012 recommendations made by the vaquita international recovery team (CIRVA) and hope your new Government will require that this alternative fishing gear be used instead of shrimp gillnets throughout the range of the vaquita and assist the fishermen in making this transition. We also encourage efforts to develop alternative gear for catching finfish.

Successful efforts by your Government to save this species would be hailed as a major conservation success, and establish Mexico as a world leader in providing solutions that allow porpoises and artisanal fishing to co-exist.

Very respectfully,



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