

International meeting votes down Japan's pro-whaling tactic, but it may have others

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• **Latest:** Japan lost a key vote Monday in its bid to have an 18-year ban on commercial whaling overturned. At the International Whaling Commission's meeting in Sorrento, Italy, Japan's motion to hold secret balloting was rejected.

Environmentalists applauded the decision, saying it ensured transparency in decision-making by the commission's 57 member countries.

Japan, the world's prime consumer of whale meat, and other pro-whaling countries such as Norway and Iceland say whales are eating too much of the world's fish and must be killed to prevent the continued decline of global fish stocks.

• **Opposing report:** An anti-whaling group, in a report presented Monday, debunked that argument, saying most food consumed by marine mammals isn't what fisheries target.

"The study shows that there is nothing to the argument that we could remove marine mammals, especially baleen whales, and feed the world with their food," said Daniel Pauly, a professor at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver and an author of the report.

"This food that marine mammals consume is essentially taken in areas where we don't fish and consists of animals that we do not exploit."

The report was funded in part by the international arm of the Humane Society of the United States, a member of an anti-whaling coalition of over 140 nongovernmental organizations called Whalewatch. It mapped the fisheries of the world and compared them with fish consumption of marine mammals, finding few zones of overlap.

Lifting the 1986 ban on commercial whaling has been the focus of recent Whaling Commission sessions. This year, Japan says it might consider pulling out of the group if the ban is not overturned.

• **Balance of power:** With a three-fourths majority required to overturn the moratorium, many expect the ban will stay.

But pro-whaling countries are close to winning the balance of power -- a result, environmentalist groups say, of what they call Japan's vote-buying technique.

They accused Japan of using development aid to swell the number of nations in the pro-whaling bloc, a charge the Japanese delegation denied.

The World Wildlife Fund points out that among additions to the pro-whaling bloc is Mongolia, which does not have a coastline. Greenpeace lists Suriname, Tuvalu, Mauritania and Ivory Coast as other recent additions.

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