



Media Advisory

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE, APRIL 13, 2010

Announcement of New Pacific Whale Sanctuary *International Expert Panel to Discuss Announcement, State of Global Whale Conservation*

A new whale sanctuary will be announced tomorrow, making it the eleventh such designation in the Pacific. The announcement takes place at the start of a week-long symposium marking the South Pacific Whale Research Consortium's tenth anniversary.

A panel of international experts will discuss the announcement and the state of global whale conservation.

More than 1,500 whales are hunted and killed each year for their meat. This occurs despite a global moratorium on commercial whaling since 1986 and the establishment of the Southern Ocean as an international whale sanctuary in 1994.

A number of events will be taking place during the week, including:

- The announcement of a new Pacific whale sanctuary
- The launch of the Oceania Humpback Whale Recovery Plan - the first whale recovery plan initiative in the Pacific Islands region and the Recovery Team's first meeting.
- Ocean Voices - an awards ceremony hosted by HRH Princess Pilolevu Tuita, Tonga's Patron of Whales and Whale Rider actor Rawiri Paratene, celebrating the 10 Pacific nations that have already declared whale sanctuaries in the EEZs
- Guest speaker Yuri Mikhalev. Yuri risked his life and career to expose the illegal Soviet whaling that caused the collapse of Oceania humpback populations.

WHAT: Announcement of a new whale sanctuary, the eleventh such designation in the Pacific. An international expert panel will discuss the announcement and the state of global whale conservation.

WHERE: School of Biological Sciences, Mac1, Auckland University, Symonds St

WHEN: **TIME**, Wednesday, 14 April 2010

WHO: **Prof. Scott Baker**, SPWRC, Associate Director of the Marine Mammal Institute at Oregon State University

Karen Sack, Director, International Ocean Conservation, the Pew Environment Group

Lui Bell, Marine Species Officer, SPREP

Sue Miller Taei, SPWRC, Conservation International

IFAW

Rawiri Paratene, Convenor, SPWRC

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The 10 Pacific nations and territories that have created whale sanctuaries within their waters are: Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, French Polynesia, New Caledonia, Niue, Papa New Guinea, Samoa, American Samoa and Vanuatu.

The South Pacific Whale Research Consortium (SPWRC) was formed by independent scientists to investigate the status of humpback and other whale species in the region of Oceania, including New Zealand and eastern Australia. Members have been involved in field studies initiated as early as 1991 in New Caledonia, the Kingdom of Tonga, the Cook Islands and French Polynesia, as well as eastern Australia, New Zealand, the Pacific coast of South America, the Ross Sea and the Antarctic Peninsula. The consortium meets annually to compare and review data collected during each winter season, including individual identification photographs, genetic samples, sighting records and song recordings. <http://www.whaleresearch.org/spwrc.htm>

More information about the Pew Environment Group's whale conservation efforts can be found here: <http://www.pewwhales.org/>

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