



# FACT SHEET

## HOW THE WORLD BENEFITS FROM WHALE SANCTUARIES

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Great whales face threats from many sources, including marine pollution, shipping interference and commercial whale hunting. Sanctuaries provide whales with a place of refuge from some of these threats, particularly commercial whaling, which continues despite a global moratorium and international condemnation.

Sanctuaries have proven benefits, including:

### **SANCTUARIES SUPPORT THE LUCRATIVE AND SUSTAINABLE WHALE WATCHING INDUSTRY**

Sanctuaries guarantee whale watching can continue. The worldwide whale watching industry is worth at least \$US1 billion every year. About nine million people in 87 countries and territories view and appreciate whales across the globe. In contrast, Japan and Norway reap only about \$US60 million a year from the sale of whale meat.

Not only is whale watching profitable, it is also sustainable. The International Whaling Commission has stated that commercial whale watching as a non-consumptive enterprise is a clearly sustainable aspect of the whale industry.

### **SANCTUARIES HELP THREATENED SPECIES RECOVER**

The recovery and long-term status of whale populations in the South Pacific region remains uncertain. Recovery from massive over-exploitation in the 19th and 20th centuries is slow and uneven across the different species of great whales. A sanctuary will afford whales greater protection and aid their recovery.

### **SANCTUARIES HIGHLIGHT ALL THREATS TO WHALES AND MARINE ECOSYSTEMS**

Commercial whaling is not the only threat to the conservation of great whales. Other threats such as marine debris and pollution are linked to fishers and boaters. Climate change is also having an impact on marine life and ecosystems. Sanctuaries enjoy the support of the international community, requiring governments to act responsibly and sensitively towards entire marine ecosystems. Sanctuaries allow for more comprehensive research into whale behaviour and the ecosystems in which they live, leading to a better understanding of the reforms necessary for the conservation of the marine environment. When armed with adequate research, governments and authorities can better manage threats such as some fishing and boating practices in areas identified as whale breeding grounds or migratory paths.

### **PRINCIPLES AND PRECEDENTS FOR ESTABLISHING WHALE SANCTUARIES ALREADY EXIST**

The IWC, by establishing the Indian Ocean Sanctuary in 1979 and the Southern Ocean Sanctuary in 1994, has accepted strong scientific and legal justifications exist for establishing sanctuaries. Research in the Southern Ocean Sanctuary has increased dramatically, with the Australian Government supporting the Southern Ocean Cetacean Ecosystem Program since 1995/96. Research results are in danger of becoming meaningless when neighbouring waters used for breeding or migrating are unprotected.

### **SANCTUARIES ENCOURAGE NON-LETHAL SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH**

Our understanding of the biology and ecology of great whales is extremely limited. We must improve our knowledge of food chains and particular species. Knowledge is essential for long-term, global management of whale stocks, conservation of marine biodiversity and for determining the effects of short and long-term environmental change. Gathering this knowledge does not require the killing of whales.