



MEDIA ADVISORY

Contact: The Marine Mammal Center: Giancarlo Rulli (415) 754-4012 |
Media@tmmc.org

Bold conservation effort to save the vaquita porpoise from extinction begins

(SAUSALITO, Calif.) – As a primary partner in an extraordinary conservation effort to save the last remaining vaquita porpoise, The Marine Mammal Center has sent one of its experts to San Felipe, Mexico. Senior Scientist Dr. Frances Gulland is currently serving as the expedition's lead veterinarian and will be in Mexico for the duration of the six-week expedition.

“This rescue effort is risky as it's never been done before and vaquita porpoises are extremely elusive,” says Dr. Jeff Boehm, Executive Director of The Marine Mammal Center. “But we can't sit back and watch this rare and beautiful species go extinct. We owe it to future generations to do everything within our power to save the vaquita.”

Led by the Mexican government (SEMARNAT), the emergency effort is known as VaquitaCPR. The vaquita porpoise, also known as the 'panda of the sea,' is the most endangered marine mammal in the world. Latest estimates by scientists who have been monitoring the vaquita for decades show there are fewer than 30 vaquitas left in the wild. The vaquita only lives in the upper Gulf of California.

VaquitaCPR field operations, including efforts to locate and bring vaquitas into temporary sea pens, began on October 12 and are expected to continue for several weeks.

The project, which has been recommended by the International Committee for the Recovery of the Vaquita (CIRVA), involves locating, rescuing and then temporarily relocating the vaquitas to an ocean sanctuary off the coast of San Felipe. The explicit goal of CPR is to return the vaquitas to their natural habitat once the primary threat to their survival - abandoned "ghost" nets, many of them illegal - has been eliminated.

To support the rescue effort, learn more about the vaquita and for information about VaquitaCPR, visit VaquitaCPR.org.

INTERVIEW OPPORTUNITIES

Interviews are available with Dr. Jeff Boehm. Please contact media@tmmc.org to schedule an interview.

ABOUT VAQUITACPR

VaquitaCPR is an international conservation program led by SEMARNAT in coordination with the National Marine Mammal Foundation, The Marine Mammal Center, and the Chicago Zoological Society.

Key collaborators in Mexico include Instituto Nacional de Ecología and Climate Change (INECC), Asociación Mexicana de Hábitats para la Interacción y Protección de Mamíferos Marinos (AMHMAR), Museo de la Ballena, and Baja Aqua Farms. United States collaborators include Duke University and the U.S. Marine Mammal Commission, with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration contributing technical support. World Wildlife Fund is contributing with acoustic monitoring and the retrieval of lost or abandoned "ghost" nets from vaquita habitat. European collaborators include Dolfinarium Harderwijk, Aarhus University, and Fjord&Baelt. Additional support and expertise has been offered from Dolphin Quest, SeaWorld, and the Vancouver Aquarium.

VaquitaCPR operates as a private and public partnership, relying on both individual donors and government grants. VaquitaCPR has received generous financial support from the Mexican government, Association of Zoos and Aquariums, Global Wildlife Conservation, Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks & Aquariums, Africam, International Marine Animal Trainer's Association, Waitt Foundation, Disney Conservation Fund, YAQU PACHA, and the Firedoll Foundation. For information about the plan, visit <https://www.vaquitacpr.org/rescue-efforts/>

ABOUT THE MARINE MAMMAL CENTER

At the Marine Mammal Center, we are guided and inspired by a shared vision of a healthy ocean for marine mammals and humans alike. Our mission is to advance global ocean conservation through marine mammal rescue and rehabilitation, scientific research, and education. Since 1975, the Center has been headquartered in the Marin Headlands, Sausalito, Calif., within the Golden Gate National Parks and has rescued and treated more than 20,000 marine mammals. In 2014, the Center opened Ke Kai Ola, a hospital for the rehabilitation of the endangered Hawaiian monk seal, in Kailua-Kona, HI.

###