



July, 2010

Dear Friend,

Last year, the Canadian Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) commissioned a secret study to plan how best to massacre and then dispose of the bodies of 100,000 grey seals living on Sable Island.

The Hon. Gale Shea, Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, will make the final decision about exterminating most of Sable Islands grey seals this fall. If she decides to kill the grey seals, the shooting and clubbing will likely begin sometime between late December and February when the seals are nursing their pups.

We need both your generous financial help and your determined activism to save the grey seals' and their pups' lives, and to protect the ecological integrity of Sable Island.

Sable Island is a crescent-shaped sand bar 300 kilometers southeast of Halifax. It's a special place – 41 kilometers long and 1.5 kilometers wide – that is home to wild horses, sea birds, rare vegetation, and marine mammals, particularly grey seals.

So unique and ecologically sensitive is Sable Island that the federal government has just proclaimed it Canada's newest national park.

Killing 100,000 of Sable Island's grey seals is just the beginning. The DFO plan calls for slaughtering a further 30,000 every year for four more years.

Total: 220,000 seals slaughtered. Where? In a national park! When? As mothers are giving birth and nursing their pups.

Why? The Canadian fishing industry – one of the worst managed, most ecologically irresponsible in the world – believes it has a “seal problem”. Driven by willful ignorance, it's convinced that grey and other seals are preventing the recovery of cod stocks. For that reason, the fishing industry wants to rid Atlantic Canada of seals, and wants the DFO to do the extermination.

Let's never forget, it was the Canadian fishing industry and its fishers that wiped out the Atlantic cod (among other species), all the while blaming everyone and everything, but themselves.

There is no scientific basis for the industry's belief (“blind prejudice” would be more accurate) that seals harm any fisheries. None whatsoever. In fact, research shows that healthy fish stocks come from healthy eco-systems that include robust populations of all indigenous species, including marine mammals.

So irrational is the DFO's and the Canadian fishing industry's abject hate for marine mammals that they refuse to accept the well-established scientific fact that they cannot “improve” the marine ecosystem for the fishing industry by exterminating animals they abhor.

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As scientists from the DFO's own Bedford Institute of Oceanography concluded recently,

“...the complete removal of grey seal predation would not assure the recovery of the cod population, given the high levels of other sources of natural mortality.”

Of course the findings of the DFO's own scientists didn't prevent DFO's spokesman, Gus van Helvoort, from deliberately misleading the press and public by claiming,

“You have this large population of pups on Sable Island. It's there in a concentrated fashion in January and February, and it's having an impact on fish and their ability to recover...”

Dr. Don Bowen is a research scientist and Adjunct Professor of Biology at the DFO's Bedford Institute of Oceanography. He's a leading expert on grey seals and their role in the ecosystem. At a meeting earlier this year, he said,

“...whether a hunt occurs or not is not a scientific decision, but a political or economic one.”

We expect the final decision on whether or not to kill the seals to come this fall. Like all DFO's fisheries management decisions, it will be based on politics.

The Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, the Hon. Gail Shea, will – as she's always done – determine what is best for her Conservative Party's electoral fortunes in Atlantic Canada and base her decision on that.

The animal cruelty, the dire ecological consequences, and the lack of any scientific reason for the killings will not matter to Shea. Of that you can be sure. Given a choice between killing seals or protecting them, Shea has always chosen to kill the seals to win fishers' votes.

What can we do? With your support, our Animal Alliance / Environment Voters candidates will raise this issue in the next federal election. We'll be doing it at candidates meetings and in our national television and radio spots. It's further proof of Prime Minister Stephen Harper's and the Conservative Party's cruel and self-serving contempt for animal and environmental protection.

However, we can't wait until the next election to act. The Minister will be deciding the fate of Sable Island's grey seals and their pups in the next few months.

But there's more we can do right now with your help. We need to convince not only the Minister, but also the Canadian fishing industry that slaughtering over 200,000 grey seals in a national park will be bad for business.

This Sable Island grey seal extermination plan is being driven by the Canadian fishing industry. We need to make their hoped slaughter of grey seals on Sable Island a seafood marketing nightmare. We need the Canadian fishing industry to call off the DFO's hired killers.

To that end, we need you to help us spread the word using every means possible about the Canadian seafood industry's horrifically destructive and cruel fishing practices – practices to which it now wants to add the mass killing of grey seals on Sable Island, our newest national park.

Starting today, we need you to begin informing people you know who eat seafood that if they buy Canadian seafood they are profiting an industry – from fisher to corporate executive – that is knowingly destroying the Canadian marine environment and aggressively promoting the extermination of grey seals, and other marine mammals.

And, we need you to tell both the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and leading seafood industry executives that you are personally spreading the word about their grey seal extermination plan.

As disturbing as the details are, I'd like to tell you more about what the DFO and the fishing industry are planning for the grey seals on Sable Island, and I want to explain in more detail how you can help prevent the murder of the seals, but before I do let me speak to the very notion of eating seafood.

As an organization and as individuals, all of us here at Animal Alliance / Environment Voters are tireless advocates for people adopting plant-based diets, and avoiding all animal-based foods.

In part, we hold, promote, and practice this view for ethical, social justice, environmental and animal protection, and health reasons. We also enjoy plant-based diets because they taste better and are more varied than animal-based ones.

A major portion the world's and humanity's ills are caused by animal-based agriculture and fisheries. Many of the social justice, health, and environmental problems that plague humankind would be solved by widespread adoption of plant-based diets.

When we ask people to take into account the practices of the Canadian fishing industry when they consider buying its products, it's not because we favor the consumption of marine animals. It's because we recognize the reality that many caring people still eat seafood, and while giving up seafood and other animal-based foods may be difficult for them, making more humane and environmental responsible food choices that might save the lives of hundreds of thousands of seals is not.

Here are some details about the DFO's Sable Island grey seal slaughter plans. The cost is estimated at \$35 million. Such estimates are rarely reliable. Enterprises like these rarely go according to plan. You can expect the final costs will be double or triple the initial estimate: \$70 to \$100 million.

The plan calls for killing the 100,000 seals over 25 days. DFO killers would shoot the adults with silencer-equipped rifles. Silencers are illegal in Canada so special permission would be needed to use them. Silencer-fitted rifles are needed so as not disturb other wildlife on Sable Island. The pups would be clubbed to death.

To kill 100,000 seals in 25 days, 10 seals would have to be killed every minute: a killing rate that would fill a tandem dump truck every 10 minutes, 7 hours a day, for 25 days.

What's to be done with the bodies? The carcasses would weigh about 15,000 tonnes, and fill 500 tractor trailers. Only one option, the plan says, is feasible. Thirty modified tree movers would be shipped to the island, and used to load the

bodies into 20 mobile crematoriums for incineration. If the bodies were not incinerated immediately, rot and disease would quickly set in creating a biohazard that could harm not only the environment, but also the health of the killers.

When I read the plan, *Logistical Evaluation of Options to Manage the Grey Seal Population on Sable Island*, and got beyond the horror of DFO's thinking, the word that came to my mind was "insane."

Included with this letter are two copies of a special pledge. If you agree with its articles, and will make a commitment – a pledge – to do what you can to expose the DFO's and the Canadian fishing industry's plan to exterminate Sable Island's grey seals, please sign the pledges.

Mail one to the Hon. Gail Shea, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans. Mail the other to Patrick McGuinness, President of the Fisheries Council of Canada (FCC). The FCC is the organization that lobbies for the Canadian fishing industry in Ottawa.

Lastly, I urge you to make a generous contribution to stop this attempted extermination. We'll use your donation to expose the DFO's and the fishing industry's grey seal extermination plan. We need to make consumers aware when they are making food choices of the cruelty and environmental destruction that the Canadian seafood industry is causing.

As I mentioned in my last letter to you, your financial support and activism helped stop the killing of over 2,000 grey seals on Hay Island.

Please, for the sake of 200,000 grey seals on Sable Island, I'm asking you to put that same determination and generosity to work to save their lives.

Thank you for considering this call for help. Thank you for all you've done and are doing to protect the animals and our shared environment.

Yours sincerely,



A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Liz White". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Liz White
Director

P.S. We've made common cause with Bridget Curran, the Director of the Atlantic Canadian Anti-Sealing Coalition, to retain Halifax-based attorney to research using the courts, provincial or federal, to prevent the DFO from slaughtering the seals on Sable Island.