

WGAP Meets in Geneva

The Western Gray Whale Advisory Panel held its 11th meeting on February 12-14, 2012, in Geneva, Switzerland. An agenda for the meeting is available online at http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/final_wgwap11_agenda_updated_11_feb_eng.pdf.

Topics discussed included 2-year evaluation; reports on field activities in 2011; and satellite tagging.

Documents distributed at the meeting included “An overview of the issues and risks to gray whales from new oil and gas development off the northeast coast of Sakhalin Island in the Sea of Okhotsk, *Response to WGWAP Recommendation 020 from Meeting 9* (January 2012).”

The “*Recommendation 020 from Meeting 9*” was:

“In addition, Sakhalin Energy has already agreed, and the Panel recommends that the company provides a comprehensive overview of the issues and risks that need to be addressed for a new development such as South Piltun, including inter alia oil spills, continuous noise, vessel collision, disturbance of benthos and cumulative impacts. This overview should include a risk matrix that makes clear how Sakhalin Energy would prioritize the various elements, as well as how the company addresses each issue in terms of potential short-, medium-, and long-term effects on the western gray whale population.”

Sakhalin Energy described its lengthy document responding to this Recommendation as follows:

“[T]his document provides the overview of the issues and risks to the gray whales around Sakhalin from activities associated with oil and gas production and development. It attempts to describe what research plans have been carried out and what they revealed about the risks associated with continuous noise, oil spill, vessel collisions, benthos and cumulative impacts.”

This document also states that

“Sakhalin Energy Investment Company Ltd completely respects gray whales. It has shown through actions and resources that it more than meets its responsibility towards them. In fact, it believes that in the context of risk from development all sea mammals should have this level of impact reduction and mitigation and that this respect from the industry should not be limited to those deemed as critically endangered. Consequently the Company’s Marine Mammal Protection Plan and mitigation measures are not restricted to Gray Whales only.”

Click here to read “An overview of the issues and risks to gray whales from new oil and gas development off the northeast coast of Sakhalin Island in the Sea of Okhotsk, *Response to WGWAP Recommendation 020 from Meeting 9* (January 2012).”

http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/response_to_wgwap_9_020_risk_mitigation_updated_11_02_12.pdf