

Response Statement - Grey Whale, Atlantic population

December 2, 2010

Common Name: Grey Whale, Atlantic population

Scientific Name: *Eschrichtius robustus*

Status assessment by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC): Extirpated

How the Minister of the Environment intends to respond to the assessment: The above assessment confirms the classification of this wildlife species in Schedule 1, the *List of Wildlife Species at Risk* as Extirpated. Activities will continue to be undertaken in a manner consistent with the purposes, and according to the timelines identified in, the *Species at Risk Act*.

Reason(s) for status designation provided by COSEWIC: *Due to a recent change in COSEWIC procedures, Reasons for status designation are not available for some species whose status is being confirmed.*

Occurrence: Atlantic Ocean

Competent Minister(s):

Minister of Fisheries and Oceans

Applicable federal legislation:

Fisheries are managed and fish habitat is protected under the *Fisheries Act*.

Conservation activities underway: DFO prepared a Recovery Strategy for the Grey Whale in 2007. At this time it was determined that recovery could only occur through reintroduction of the species from a donor population in the eastern Pacific Ocean. However the reintroduction of large whales to an area from which they have been extirpated, and the associated re-establishment of their complex migratory routes, has never been attempted and appears unlikely to be feasible for the Grey Whale. In addition to the logistical problems of transporting whales from the Pacific to the Atlantic, there is also the issue of the potential introduction of novel pathogens to the Atlantic Ocean where they may impact other endangered whales. In addition, the habitat necessary for breeding and calving (undisturbed coastal and lagoon habitat) has been significantly degraded by industrial and urban development and it is doubtful that it could be made suitable to support a Grey Whale population. Currently, it is unlikely that the many issues surrounding the re-introduction of Grey Whales to the Atlantic could be resolved to allow the survival and recovery of this population, so recovery has been deemed technically and biologically unfeasible at this time. The feasibility of recovery will be re-evaluated as warranted in response to changing conditions, as well as every five years as part of the mandatory report on implementation of the recovery strategy. The next evaluation of feasibility is scheduled in 2012.