



CLEARWATER MARINE AQUARIUM

PRESS RELEASE

Clearwater Marine Aquarium Announces Global Campaign To Save Near Extinct Species

- CMA will launch “Winter’s Hope for the Vaquita,” an international effort to save the most endangered marine mammal in the world

Clearwater, FL (November, 2014) – Clearwater Marine Aquarium announced today an international conservation effort aimed at saving the vaquita porpoise, a species on the verge of extinction. The campaign, entitled “Winter’s Hope for the Vaquita,” will create awareness and a call to action to save the rarest and smallest marine mammal in the world. Found in Mexico’s Gulf of California, it is estimated there are fewer than 100 of these individuals remaining.

Vaquita are frequently caught unintentionally by local fishermen using giant fishing nets called “gillnets,” where the small porpoise becomes entangled and dies. These gillnets are being used to catch totoaba fish, also an endangered species, that are poached for their swim bladder. Fishermen can receive up to \$10,000 per kilogram for the totoaba swim bladders, believed to have medicinal qualities in China. Similar nets are also used to catch shrimp, sharks and other fish in the vaquita's home habitat.

The Mexican government is currently in discussions with local fishermen to enact a two year ban on the use of these gillnets. Many fishermen want to help and the Mexican government will compensate them for their lost earnings during this time. This two year ban will be the first step in helping the vaquita begin to re-populate and save it from extinction.

“Winter’s Hope for the Vaquita” asks supporters to join Winter, Hope and the team at Clearwater Marine Aquarium to save the vaquita and enact this strict two year program of banning gillnets. With the public’s help, we can save an entire species that could potentially face extinction in the next few years. The extinction of a species can have a long-term impact on marine life and our eco-systems. It’s Winter’s hope that the vaquita will survive and remain in our oceans forever.

Supporters are urged to sign a petition at www.seewinter.com that will encourage the Mexican government to enact a two year ban on the use of gillnets. During this two year period, Clearwater Marine Aquarium will collaborate with other organizations on researching a long-term solution, such as an alternative net that does not entangle the vaquita.

WE BELIEVE in preserving our marine life and environment while inspiring the human spirit through leadership in education, research, rescue, rehabilitation, and release.

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A Florida non-profit 501(c)(3) organization



Bob Talbot, an environmentalist and world renowned marine photographer who works closely with Clearwater Marine Aquarium noted, “We have a very rare opportunity right now to take meaningful action and stop the extinction of an animal. We have an opportunity to make a difference.”

David Yates, CEO of Clearwater Marine Aquarium stated, “Clearwater Marine Aquarium is blessed to have become a world renowned facility with millions of followers and allow the world to see the impact marine mammals can have on the human race. Now we can help the vaquita. We ask all of our followers and beyond to be involved in saving this beautiful species.”

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About Clearwater Marine Aquarium:

Clearwater Marine Aquarium (CMA) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit working marine rescue center dedicated to inspiring the human spirit through leadership in education, research, rescue, rehabilitation and release. CMA is home to rescued dolphins, sea turtles, river otters, stingrays, nurse sharks and more. Winter the dolphin’s story of survival after injury that caused her to lose her tail has impacted millions of people around the world. A major motion picture, *Dolphin Tale*, highlighted her life story in 2011. The sequel, *Dolphin Tale 2*, was released in September 2014 and features the incredible story of Hope, a young resident dolphin of CMA. The mission and potential to change people’s lives differentiates Clearwater Marine Aquarium from any other aquarium in the world.

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