

## **Saving the Vaquita: Immediate Action, Not More Data**

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### Introduction:

The recent likely extinction of the baiji (Chinese river dolphin [*Lipotes vexillifer*]) (Turvey et al. 2007) makes the vaquita (Gulf of California porpoise [*Phocoena sinus*]) the most endangered cetacean. The vaquita has the smallest range of any porpoise, dolphin, or whale and, like the baiji, has long been threatened primarily by accidental deaths in fishing gear (bycatch) (Rojas-Bracho et al. 2006).

Despite repeated recommendations from scientific bodies and conservation organizations, no effective actions have been taken to remove nets from the vaquita's environment.

Here, we address three questions that are important to vaquita conservation: (1) How many vaquitas remain? (2) How much time is left to find a solution to the bycatch problem? and (3) Are further abundance surveys or bycatch estimates needed to justify the immediate removal of all entangling nets from the range of the vaquita? Our answers are, in short: (1) there are about 150 vaquitas left, (2) there are at most 2 years within which to find a solution, and (3) further abundance surveys or bycatch estimates are not needed. The answers to the first two questions make clear that action is needed now, whereas the answer to the last question removes the excuse of uncertainty