

Japan warms to Eskimo bowhead whaling

by UPI

ANCHORAGE, Alaska - The Japanese delegation at the International Whaling Commission meeting in Anchorage, Alaska, says it won't try to stop Eskimo bowhead whaling anymore.

The annual meeting began Monday with delegates from about 80 countries hearing from IWC scientists the existing quota of 75 bowheads for Alaska's North Slope and St. Lawrence Island Eskimos was sustainable, the Anchorage Daily News reported Tuesday.

They estimated bowhead numbers at more than 10,800, and growing steadily.

Every five years, the commission votes on quotas, and in 2002, a Japanese-led coalition voted down the Eskimo renewal, which was overturned in a special meeting held later.

"We have no reason to oppose the bowhead quota this time," said Joji Morishita, alternate delegate for Japan.

The newspaper said U.S. officials aren't so sure of the sincerity, however.

"The simple fact of it is we don't know what they'll do," said Sen. Ted Stevens, R-Alaska, who supports the Eskimo subsistence whaling.

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