



October 25th, 2012

To Whom It May Concern...

On behalf of SEA LIFE Centres worldwide, not least the five centres here in the US, I feel compelled to register the strongest possible opposition to the proposed import of the 18 wild-caught belugas to the Georgia aquarium.

SEA LIFE concurs with the view of all the leading authorities in this field and indeed the majority of ordinary American citizens canvassed on this subject, that cetaceans are not suited to captivity...no matter how spacious or well-designed the facilities.

They are wide-ranging, highly intelligent and social animals which suffer acute sensory deprivation in any kind of unnatural confinement.

The argument that such displays are good for education and conservation does not, in our view, come anywhere near to outweighing the undoubted suffering and stress incurred not only by the captured animals themselves, but also by the family groups from which they have been so cruelly and abruptly separated.

America is an enlightened nation which should be leading the world in demonstrating care and compassion for special creatures like these. Instead we are one of the worst offenders in perpetuating an out-dated and wholly unethical trade and practice.

SEA LIFE's parent company has itself – through its acquisition of theme parks which already housed them - become custodian of captive dolphins and whales.

Rather than further exploit these animals for profit, we are urgently progressing plans to create a natural sanctuary where these and hopefully others from other public attractions around the world, can be re-homed, retired and if feasible, rehabilitated.

Keeping cetaceans of any kind, even when there is some educational merit, is a vastly different proposition to the display of fish and other marine creatures which have been proven to flourish in carefully designed and maintained aquarium tanks.

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Unless they are injured or ailing rescued animals requiring full time care, it is just plain wrong...and we would be failing in our responsibility as the world's largest aquarium operator were we not to say so publicly, for the long-term credibility of our industry as well as the more immediate benefit of the unfortunate beluga whales currently awaiting their fate in a cramped holding pen in Russia.

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