



Madame Agnès Pannier-Runacher,
Ministre de la Transition Écologique de la Biodiversité,
de la Forêt, de la Mer, et de la Pêche,
Paris, France.

February 16th, 2025

Dear Mme Minister,

We are responding to your announcement on Instagram about the possible creation of an orca sanctuary somewhere in the Mediterranean in collaboration with Italy, Spain and Greece as a possible solution to the plight of Wikie and Keijo.

Given your continuing interest in a sanctuary solution, we request a meeting with you to realistically examine all sanctuary options for Wikie and Keijo.

While it is probably the case that the dolphins at Marineland could be retired to a sanctuary in the Mediterranean, we must emphasize that there is no sanctuary solution in southern Europe for orcas.

This is not simply our own opinion. According to the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts, the average water temperature in one of the proposed sites, Lipsi Bay, in August is 25.4 degrees, which, according to experts, is too warm for orcas. For example, in a letter to One Voice, Dr. David Perpiñán, who specializes in exotic, zoo and wildlife medicine and is a diplomate of the European College of Zoological Medicine, writes: “The Mediterranean is too hot for these animals, and that's why orcas are so uncommon in Italy and Greece. And these two orcas do not belong to the ecotypes seen in the Mediterranean.” (Wikie and Keijo are Icelandic orcas.)

Our president, Dr. Lori Marino, has studied the brains of whales and dolphins for more than 30 years. Her conclusion – that orcas are among the most intelligent and emotionally sensitive animals in the world – led to the founding of the Whale Sanctuary Project in 2016. And our search for the most suitable site, quickly led, because of the temperatures, to the elimination of anywhere in Southern Europe and finally to the selection of Port Hilford Bay in Nova Scotia as the best solution for the needs of orcas.

We have completed the required three years of environmental studies and sanctuary design work and are ready to begin construction. The remaining roadblock for Wikie and Keijo to come to Nova Scotia is financial. That is why we consider that now is the moment

for a collaboration of all parties to provide a sanctuary solution for Wikie and Keijo so that we can mobilize people to support this move.

Regarding the proposal for a cetacean sanctuary on Lipsi Island in the Aegean: While we do not consider it to be a viable option for orcas, it could indeed be suitable for bottlenose dolphins.

The lives of Wikie and Keijo are too important for us all to miss this opportunity to do what is right for them.

Thank you for your consideration.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Charles Vinick".

Charles Vinick, Executive Director

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