

Mexico boosts protection of near-extinct porpoise

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A report by a panel of [international scientists](#) warned last year that there

were fewer than 100 vaquitas remaining, down from 200 specimens in 2012, and the animal could vanish by 2018.

The dire warning prompted the government to take steps to protect the species, which is unique to Mexico and has been killed in gillnets used by local fishermen.

President Enrique Pena Nieto outlined the four protective measures during a visit to a fishing town in northwestern Baja California state on Thursday.

"We are a green government," Pena Nieto said.

The measures include: widening the protected area, which will be policed by the navy; providing financial compensation to fishermen who can no longer work there; boosting inspections; and encouraging new forms of fishing. The navy was getting new patrol ships.

The environment ministry had announced in February that the protected area would grow from 126,000 hectares to 1.3 million hectares.

Last year's scientific report blamed the destruction of the porpoise on gillnets, which fishermen have used to catch another endangered species, the totoaba—a giant fish that is prized in China for its [swim bladder](#).

The report says fishermen get up to \$8,500 per kilo (2.2 pounds) of totoaba swim bladder, amounting to half a year's income from legal fishing.

The government announced last week that it was temporarily suspending the right to use gillnets for two years.

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