

# Ga. aquarium denied permit to import 18 belugas

7 August 2013

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Georgia Aquarium officials say the National Marine Fisheries Service has denied its application to import beluga whales from Russia.

In a statement Tuesday, Georgia Aquarium spokeswoman Meghann Gibbons said aquarium officials were deeply disappointed in the decision.

The aquarium applied in June 2012 to import 18 whales as part of an initiative aimed at improving the [genetic diversity](#) of belugas living in American captivity.

Georgia Aquarium zoologists have said most belugas living in America are past their prime calf-bearing age, and importing new ones could improve breeding efforts.

Officials from the Humane Society of the United States say nearly 9,000 people submitted comments in opposition of the import proposal, and the Humane Society sponsored a petition that generated more than 69,000 signatures in opposition.

Georgia Aquarium, the world's largest, draws 2.2 million guests per year.

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