

Underwater noise pollution

Sound is the most effective means for marine life to sense their surroundings and communicate across the ocean’s vast expanse. Impulsive noise, including seismic activity, sonar and pile driving, can result in temporary or permanent damage to aquatic species at risk. Continuous radiated noise, primarily generated by shipping traffic, leads to acoustic masking and reduces aquatic species’ ability to communicate, sense danger, forage, and mate. Underwater noise also compromises the ability of at-risk cetaceans to perceive their environment, and is considered a principal threat to the recovery of two priority species in Canada’s Whales Initiative, and a significant stressor for the third.

Recommended Investment: **\$200 million over five years to:**

identify and implement regional, science-based underwater noise targets for key Canadian ecosystems, including the Salish Sea, Saguenay-St. Lawrence, and the Eastern Arctic; develop and establish regional noise management frameworks to achieve those targets; and begin implementation of the management frameworks, including integration into other government programs. [DFO, TC]

To meet Target 7 of the GBF, this investment should prioritize:

- Support for Transport Canada initiatives to reduce underwater vessel noise and disturbance impacts, such as the Quiet Vessel Initiative; completing work on the national Underwater Vessel Noise Reduction advisory group and operationalizing Underwater Noise Management Planning and target requirements for vessel owners and operators; and for complementary work at the International Maritime Organization. [TC]
- Support for DFO to develop and integrate noise monitoring into ongoing and developing implementation of MPAs and MPA networks, OECMs, IPCAs, and Critical Habitat for at-risk marine mammals. Data should be made publicly available. [DFO]
- Mandating DFO and TC to collaborate to enforce, adaptively implement, and expand as appropriate TC initiatives for the management of vessel noise and disturbance for at-risk whales. [DFO, TC]

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