

Underwater noise pollution (Target 7)

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 and tourism, leads to acoustic masking and reduces aquatic species’ ability to communicate, sense danger, forage, and mate. Underwater noise also compromises the ability of cetaceans, especially those already at-risk, to perceive their environment and is considered a principal threat to the recovery of two priority species (Southern Resident Killer Whales and St. Lawrence Estuary Belugas) in Canada’s Whales Initiative, and a significant stressor for the third (Narwhal).

Recommended Investment:

- **\$200 million over five years** to fund a comprehensive Ocean Noise Strategy 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 ensure meaningful reductions in noise pollution, 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 complementary work at

the International Maritime Organization [TC];

- Support for DFO to develop and integrate noise monitoring into ongoing and developing implementation of Marine Protected Areas (MPA) and MPA networks, Other Effective Conservation Measures (OECM), Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCA), and Critical Habitat for at-risk marine mammals. Data should be made publicly available [DFO]; and
- 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]

See also Marine shipping, earlier in this document.

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