



WWF

FACTSHEET

2014

Marine

# WWF-Canada: Turning Down the Volume on Underwater Noise



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**REDUCING UNDERWATER NOISE POLLUTION IS CRITICAL TO PROTECTING AND RECOVERING MARINE SPECIES**

## A Growing Conservation Concern

Increasing underwater noise pollution off Canada's Pacific coast is an issue of growing conservation concern. Excessive underwater noise affects whales, dolphins and other marine animals that use sound to communicate, find food and avoid predators. Off the coast of British Columbia, vessel traffic, related port operations and infrastructure development are the prominent sources of underwater noise. Southern resident killer whales and their critical habitat lie within some of the heaviest transited shipping corridors serving the Ports of Vancouver and Seattle. B.C.'s north and central coasts are considered important habitat and potential critical habitat for multiple at-risk species, including northern resident killer whales, humpback whales and fin whales. Proposed industrial developments across region are set to significantly increase shipping traffic, and change the underwater soundscape and acoustic character of such important habitat areas. For critically endangered species, underwater noise poses a significant impediment to their recovery.

For WWF, reducing disruptive underwater noise is critical to ensuring sustainable use of coastal marine environments and protecting the health of our oceans everywhere. Over the past 3 years, WWF-Canada has worked to raise the awareness and profile of this emerging issue. We have convened experts, policy makers, managers, planners and decision makers to better understand this problem; and to seek solutions to reduce underwater noise and its effects on B.C.'s ocean and coastal environments. Some of our work is described in this information sheet.

## WWF WORKS WITH DIVERSE PARTNERS TO FIND PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS TO PREVENT AND MITIGATE UNDERWATER NOISE POLLUTION

### Advancing the science and assessment of underwater noise

- In 2012, we convened regional and international experts to provide a [regional assessment of underwater noise on Canada's Pacific Coast](#).
- WWF commissioned studies to model and produce the first ever map of underwater noise pollution from shipping in the region.
- WWF commissioned work to assess future increase in underwater noise from proposed developments on the north coast to help managers and decision-makers better understand its risks.

### Increasing the capacity to monitor underwater noise in key ecological areas

- WWF is supporting local partners on the north coast to increase their capacity to monitor and study underwater noise through installations of calibrated hydrophones.
- We are facilitating the provision of technical expertise to citizen science groups to help standardize and integrate underwater noise data collection efforts.



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### Advocating for effective policy and regulations to manage underwater noise

- With our colleagues internationally, WWF has provided input into the International Maritime Organization (IMO) *Guidelines for the reduction of underwater noise from shipping*; and to expert workshops convened by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).
- Nationally, WWF advocates for the enactment of measures to reduce noise, including stronger guidelines on seismic testing and noise standards.
- WWF has provided input to make underwater noise pollution a consideration in marine spatial plans under development for B.C.'s north coast.
- We have published papers on the science and policy needs for underwater noise regulation in Canada.

### Working for the establishment of measures and best practices for noise reduction

- WWF continues to work to find ways to reduce underwater noise with key industry players including ports and shipping companies, as well as with industry-wide environmental programs such as Green Marine.
- In 2013, we convened a second multi-stakeholder workshop on [finding solutions to underwater noise in Canada's Pacific](#).
- With advice from key experts, WWF is advancing and advocating for a network of quiet areas and whale sanctuaries that will help preserve acoustic habitats for cetacean species.

**For further information, please contact:**

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	<p><b>Why we are here</b> We are creating solutions to the most serious conservation challenges facing our planet, helping people and nature thrive.</p> <p><a href="http://wwf.ca">wwf.ca</a></p>
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