

Press Conference

UN Environment Programme-Convention on Migratory Species

Noise Pollution and Ship-Strikes

3 December, 12.30 hrs Iran Room, UN Food and Agricultural Organization
Headquarters, Rome

Ocean noise pollution and whale ship strikes - what are the potential mitigation measures?

The oceans and seas in which marine mammals like whales and dolphins live may be getting noisier. Increased levels of shipping, seismic sounds from activities such as oil and gas exploration may be to blame. Ocean noise can travel over long distances and affect waters outside the control of individual nations. Given the fact that such noise is transboundary - and that some marine species relying on sound for orientation, communication and feeding migrate across hundreds of miles – this is an issue that calls for international regulation. High noise levels can cause disorientation, exclude cetaceans from habitats and even directly cause physical injury and death. Propeller-driven ships have become the most dominant human-induced low frequency noise. A new concern are rising concentrations of CO₂ which may be making sounds waves travel further and faster, as a recent study suggests, demonstrating the link between climate change and this conservation issue. The **Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species** (CMS) and some of its agreements have identified ocean noise as a potential threat to migratory species and support action to reduce its impact.

Meanwhile many marine mammals remain at risk from ship strikes and other indirect impacts and threats. As ocean traffic has increased and as ships have gotten faster, the frequency of ship-whale collisions has also grown. Many kinds of ships are involved: container ships, large cargo ships, high-speed ferries, and others. For some whale species and populations the cumulative effect can be significant. One example is the North Atlantic right whale (*Eubalaena glacialis*). Only about 350 remain, and collisions with ships have been frequent. Altering shipping routes to avoid known areas of high whale concentration and limiting ship speed are possible mitigation measures. In another approach to mitigation, the presence and movements of whales can be monitored visually or acoustically, potentially allowing them to be avoided.

Participants:

Robert Hepworth, CMS Executive Secretary

Dr Marie Christine Grillo Compulsione, ACCOBAMS Executive Secretary

Dr William Perrin, Senior Scientist for Marine Mammals, Conference Appointed Councilor for Aquatic Species

Mark Simmonds, International Director of Science' Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society (WDCCS)

Veronica Frank, Campaign Officer, IFAW EU

The press conference will be held in English. Please bring your ID and a valid press card upon registration or a letter your editor.

You are kindly requested to register by Wednesday 10.00 hrs at the following e-mail address: vlendarz@cms.int or contact:

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