

Participants of the Workshop on Assessing  
the Cumulative Impacts of Underwater  
Noise with Other Anthropogenic Stressors  
on Marine Mammals: From Ideas to Action  
c/o Okeanos - Stiftung für das Meer /  
Foundation for the Sea (Workshop Sponsor)  
Auf der Marienhöhe 15  
D-64297 Darmstadt, Germany

mail@okeanos-stiftung.org

7<sup>th</sup> October, 2009

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

We write to urge you to address anthropogenic ocean noise, a growing threat to whales and other marine life, in your new National Oceans Policy.

We applaud the recognition of the threats facing ocean health detailed in your June 12<sup>th</sup> Presidential Memorandum and welcome your initiative to develop timely strategies to halt and reverse damage to the marine environment. One threat not highlighted, and one we believe is largely curable, is the rising level of noise in the sea, which amplifies the problems already faced by ocean life.

The ocean is a world of sound. Animals such as whales, dolphins, and fish depend on hearing for communicating, foraging, finding mates, detecting predators, and maintaining family and social groups. Human activity is rapidly altering the ocean's natural acoustic habitats. Industrial and commercial underwater noise propagates over enormous distances, affecting millions of square miles of ocean. For example, background noise at the same low frequencies vital to many marine species has increased 100-fold in some locations over the last 50 years. This growing fog of noise is shrinking the perceptual world of whales and other marine life, undermining their ability to "see" with sound. Chronic noise exposure is a recently recognized, largely hidden threat that can reduce long-term survival rates, while exposure to loud noise can result in injury, and even death in certain circumstances. Today few places in the world's oceans remain free of noises from human activities.

An international, multi-disciplinary group of scientists and resource managers gathered in Monterey, California, in August 2009, to discuss ways to manage the cumulative impacts of noise and other threats to whales and other marine life. We, the undersigned participants of this workshop, believe that reducing ocean noise is an achievable goal that will help marine life cope with less tractable threats such as climate change.

Unlike other ocean contaminants, noise does not remain in the environment for very long after the source is removed (although some effects may linger), and it is often produced unintentionally. Most major noise sources, including propeller noise from large commercial ships and seismic pulses used in oil and gas exploration, can be reduced and still produce the public benefits desired. This can be achieved through operational measures and the application of technologies that are currently, or very soon to be, commercially available. Many noise sources can also be effectively mitigated through marine spatial planning. Federally mandated reductions will help fulfill agency obligations under the Endangered Species Act, Marine Mammal Protection Act, and other statutes, and expedite the recovery of endangered and threatened species.

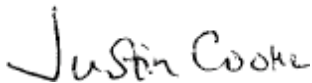
Therefore we urge you to ensure, as an element of the new National Oceans Policy, that no net increase in ambient noise occurs in U. S. coastal waters and that a schedule be established to realize substantial reductions in ocean noise by 2020.



Michael Bode, Ph.D.  
School of Botany,  
University of Melbourne,  
Victoria 3010, Australia.



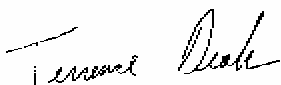
Christopher W. Clark, Ph.D.  
I.P. Johnson Director Bioacoustics Research  
Program, Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology,  
Cornell University,  
159 Sapsucker Woods Road,  
Ithaca, NY 14850, USA.



Justin Cooke, Ph.D.  
Centre for Ecosystem Management Studies  
Höllenbergstr. 7  
79312 Windenreute  
Germany



Larry B. Crowder, Ph.D.  
Stephen Toth Professor of Marine Biology  
Duke University Marine Lab  
Duke Center for Marine Conservation  
135 Duke Marine Lab Road  
Beaufort, NC 28516, USA



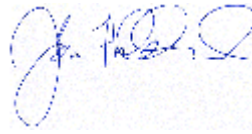
Terrence Deak, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor  
Behavioral Neuroscience Program  
Department of Psychology  
SUNY-Binghamton  
Binghamton, NY 13902-6000, USA



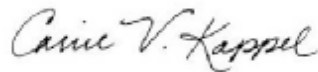
Jeffrey E. Green, M.Sc., R.P. Biol., P. Biol.  
Senior Principal, Environmental Management  
Stantec  
4370 Dominion Street 5th Floor  
Burnaby, BC, V5G 4L7, Canada.



Lorne Greig, M.Sc.  
Senior Systems Ecologist  
ESSA Technologies Ltd.  
77 Angelica Avenue,  
Richmond Hill, ON L4S 2C9, Canada



John Hildebrand, Ph.D.  
Scripps Institution of Oceanography  
University of California San Diego  
Ritter Hall 200E  
8635 Kennel Way  
La Jolla, CA 92093-0205



Carrie Kappel  
Assistant Project Scientist  
National Center for Ecological Analysis and  
Synthesis  
University of California, Santa Barbara  
735 State Street, Suite 300  
Santa Barbara, CA 93101, USA



Kristy J. Kroeker  
PhD candidate: Micheli Lab  
Hopkins Marine Station  
Stanford University  
100 Oceanview Blvd  
Pacific Grove, CA, 93950



Lisa L. Loseto, PhD,  
NSERC Post Doctoral Fellow,  
School of Earth and Ocean Sciences,  
University of Victoria,  
Victoria BC, V8W 3V6, Canada



Marc Mangel, PhD,  
Distinguished Professor of Mathematical Biology;  
Director, Center for Stock Assessment Research.  
Department Applied Mathematics & Statistics  
The Jack Baskin School of Engineering  
University of California  
Santa Cruz, CA 95064, USA



Jose Javier Ramasco, Ph.D.  
ISI Foundation,  
Viale S. Severo 65,  
10133 Torino, Italy



Randall R. Reeves, Ph.D.  
Chairman, IUCN/SSC Cetacean Specialist Group;  
Member of Committee of Scientific Advisers,  
Marine Mammal Commission.  
27 Chandler Lane,  
Hudson, Quebec, J0P 1H0, Canada.



Robert Suydam, Ph.D.  
P.O. Box 1132  
Barrow, AK 99723, USA



Linda S. Weilgart, Ph.D.  
Dalhousie University, Dept. of Biology.  
1355 Oxford St.  
Halifax, Nova Scotia, B3H 4J1, Canada.

cc: Gary Locke, Secretary of Commerce  
Ken Salazar, Secretary of Interior  
Nancy Sutley, Chair, Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force  
Dr. Jane Lubchenco, Undersecretary for Oceans and Atmosphere, NOAA Administrator  
Lisa P. Jackson, Administrator of EPA  
Sen. Maria Cantwell, Chair, Oceans Subcommittee, Senate Commerce Committee  
Sen. Olympia Snowe, Ranking Member, Oceans Subcommittee, Senate Commerce  
Committee  
Rep. Madeleine Bordallo, Chair, Insular Affairs, Oceans and Wildlife Subcommittee, House  
Natural Resources Committee  
Rep. Henry Brown, Jr., Ranking Member, Insular Affairs, Oceans and Wildlife Subcommittee,  
House Natural Resources Committee