

Petition for Action on the Use of High-Intensity Active Sonar

THIS PETITION seeking action on the military use of high-intensity active sonar is hereby submitted on behalf of the European Coalition for Silent Oceans with thirty-nine member organizations representing over 500,000 European citizens and on behalf of twenty-eight U.S., Canadian and international conservation and animal welfare organizations representing over 7,800,000 citizens of the United States of America, Canada and international member nations.

Regulation of this technology is a matter of broad, demonstrated public interest on which the European Parliament, pursuant to the European Union's objective of environmental protection, should take action.

REASONS FOR ACTION

We are deeply concerned about the growing use of intense active sonar in the marine environment. While passive sonar is designed to detect the sounds that other vessels produce, active systems generate their own sound waves and then decipher the echo they receive from distant targets. There is grave concern that proliferation of this technology poses a significant threat to marine mammals, fish and other ocean wildlife.

Scientists agree, and a growing body of research confirms, that the intense sound produced by these technologies can induce a range of adverse effects in marine mammals. These effects include death and serious injury caused by lung hemorrhage or tissue trauma; strandings and beachings; temporary and permanent hearing loss or impairment; and disruption of feeding, breeding, nursing, communication and sensing, and other behaviors vital to the survival of these species. Similar concerns exist for potential impacts on other marine populations, especially species of fish.

As stated most recently by the Cetacean Specialist Group of the IUCN-World Conservation Union: "Military operations involving the use of high-intensity sonar, explosive devices, and other intense noise sources pose both lethal and sub-lethal threats to cetaceans." Of particular concern is "the development by several navies of very low-frequency sonars, known as 'LFA' in the United States, with detection ranges, and thus potential effect ranges, of several hundred kilometers."

Public and scientific concern has grown, over the last decade, in the wake of a series of mass mortalities of cetaceans associated with the use of mid-frequency active sonar in coastal environments. The best-documented cases, where stranded animals were recovered in time for necropsy, occurred in the Bahamas (2000), Madeira (2000), and the Canary Islands (2002). Other cases have occurred in Greece (1996), the U.S. Virgin Islands (1998, 1999), the Canary Islands (1985, 1986, 1989), and, most recently, the Northwest coast of the United States (2003). However, the magnitude of the problem is

not known as several recent lines of evidence indicate whales may die at sea where carcasses sink and are almost impossible to detect.

High-intensity sound has been shown to have adverse impacts on other marine species as well. While research in this area is rudimentary, it has been demonstrated that some sources of sound have the potential to injure and kill and to significantly reduce catch rates of certain fish species at substantial distances. The proliferation of active sonar poses a threat to already depleted fish stocks throughout the world's oceans.

It is clear that the use of active sonar technology is expanding. Low-frequency active systems are in development by the U.S. and Australian navies, and by member states of the European Union such as France, Germany, Great Britain, and the Netherlands. A number of other systems, including the mid-frequency system that has been implicated in several mass stranding events, are being deployed, tested, or reconditioned for use in coastal waters, which contain critical habitat for marine mammals and other ocean life. Along with the scientific community, we are deeply concerned about the cumulative and synergistic environmental impacts that all of these systems, operating independently, might have.

ACTION REQUESTED

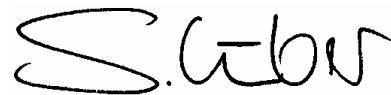
We call upon the Parliament to take the following actions:

- (1) We request that the Parliament use its power and influence to urge the navies of the world to effectively and rapidly mitigate their use of high-intensity active sonar;
- (2) We request that the Parliament ask the European Union, its member states, and the European Commission to adopt a moratorium on the deployment of low-frequency active sonar until a global assessment of its cumulative environmental impacts can be prepared;
- (3) We request that the Parliament inquire into possible legal remedies to address the uncontrolled use of this technology in the marine environment, acknowledging that current deployment by some nations may be in breach of Articles 204-206 of the United Nations Law of the Sea Convention (UNCLOS), which requires States "to assess the potential effects of such activities on the marine environment," and in violation of UNCLOS Article 194, which requires states to take all measures "necessary to prevent, reduce and control pollution of the marine environment from any source"; and
- (4) We request that the Parliament initiate the formation of a Multinational Task Force with the goal of developing international agreements regulating noise levels in the world's oceans.

We are signing this petition on behalf of the European Coalition for Silent Oceans, which has 39 member organizations representing 500,000 European citizens.

Name: Liz Sandeman
Nationality: Great Britain
Occupation: Charity Co-Founder
Address: Marine Connection
PO Box 2404
London, England W23WG

Sigrid Lueber
Swiss
CEO of ASMS
CH8820
Waldenswil, Switzerland



We are signing this petition on behalf of twenty-eight conservation and animal welfare organizations in the United States and Canada representing over 7,800,000 U.S., Canadian and international citizens.

Name: Marsha L. Green, PhD
Nationality: USA
Occupation: Professor
Address: P.O. Box 14422
Reading, PA 19612
USA

Michael Jasny
USA
Senior Policy Analyst
NRDC
6310 San Vicente Blvd., Ste. 250
Los Angeles, CA 90036

Signature:



Name: Lindy Weilgart, PhD
Nationality: German
Occupation: Assistant Professor
Address: Dalhousie University
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3H 4J1 Canada

Members of the European Coalition for Silent Oceans

Animalisti Italiani, Italy (www.animalisti.it)

ASMS(Swiss Marine Mammal Protection) (www.asms-swiss.org)

Aargauer Tierschutz, Switzerland

Daupin Libres et Captifs, Belgium (www.dauphinlibre.be)

DELPHIN INSTITUT FREIBURG, Germany (www.delphin-institut.de)

DELPHIS Mediterranean Dolphin Conservation, Italy (www.delphismdc.org)

Die Welt der Wale und Delfine, Germany (www.cetaceen.de)

Finns for the Whales Society, Finland (<http://members.seurfeu.fi/whale>)

FIRMM, Switzerland and Spain (www.firrm.org)

Gesellschaft zur Rettung der Delphine, Deutschland (www.delphinschutz.org)

Hai Stiftung, Switzerland (www.hai.ch)

IMMRAC (Israeli Marine Mammal Research and Assistance Center), Israel

(<http://maritime.haifa.ac.il/cms/immrac/immrac.htm>)

Institut für Aquatische Körperarbeit, Switzerland (www.aquatischekoerperarbeit.ch)

Korte PHI, Germany (www.KortePHI.com)

La Baleine Libre, Belgium (http://users.swing.be/baleine_libre/)

Liquid Sound, Germany (www.liquidsound.com)

Marine Connection, England (www.marineconnection.org)

M.E.E.R, Germany and Spain (www.m-e-e-r.de)

Morigenos - marine mammal research and conservation society, Slovenia (www.morigenos.org)

Natur im Bild, Germany (www.naturimbild.de)

PADI PROJECT AWARE, Europe (www.projectaware.org)

PROWILDLIFE, Germany (www.prowildlife.de)

Réseau-Cétacés, France (www.reseaucetaces.org)

Schweizer Tierschutz, Switzerland (www.tierschutz.com)

Schweizer Wal-Gesellschaft, Switzerland (www.isuisse.com/cetaces)

Shark Info, Switzerland (www.sharkinfo.ch)

SHARKPROJECT, Deutschland (www.sharkproject.com)
Swiss Cetacean Society, Switzerland (www.oenology.ch/scs)
SOS Grand Bleu, France (www.sosgrandbleu.asso.fr)
Stiftung Caretakers, Switzerland (caretakers.deployzone.net)
Tethys, Italy (www.tethys.org)
Tierschutz Bund, Switzerland (www.tierschutzbund-zuerich.ch)
Tortugas, Switzerland (www.tortugas.ch)
Vier Pfoten, Österreich (www.vier-pfoten.at)
Vier Pfoten, Switzerland (www.vier-pfoten.ch)
Vier Pfoten, Deutschland (www.vier-pfoten.de)
Vier Pfoten, Rumänien (www.vier-pfoten.ro)
Vier Pfoten, Bulgarien (www.vier-pfoten.bg)
WWF Schweiz (www.wwf.ch)

United States, Canadian and International Organizations

Americans for a Safe Future
Animal Welfare Institute
Captive Dolphin Awareness Foundation
Cetacean Society International
Chico Organization for Cetaceans
Defenders of Wildlife
Earth Island Institute
Eco-Link
Environmental Defense Center
Environmental Health Coalition
Greenpeace International
Hawai'i Wildlife Fund
Humane Society of Canada
Humane Society of the United States

International Fund for Animal Welfare

International Wildlife Coalition

Natural Resources Defense Council

Oceanic Society

Ocean Mammal Institute

Orca Conservancy

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals

Sea Sanctuary, Inc.

Seaflow

Sierra Club

Stop LFAS Worldwide Network

Surfrider Foundation

Voice for Animals Society, Canada

Whaleman Foundation