

ECHO Program Summary

Marine Mammals in British Columbia

British Columbia has a dynamic and growing international trade gateway. It also has a productive coastal ecosystem that sustains populations of whales, porpoises and dolphins (cetaceans). Fisheries and Oceans Canada has published Species at Risk Act Recovery Strategies and Action Plans for a number of at-risk whale species in the region designating critical habitat. Some of the key threats to whales in this region include: acoustic disturbance (underwater noise), physical disturbance (ship collisions), environmental contaminants, and the availability of prey.

Much of the commercial vessel activity in the southern coast of British Columbia transits designated critical habitat of endangered southern resident killer whale as well as areas known to be of importance to other at-risk whales. With commercial vessel activity predicted to grow, Port of Vancouver is committed to conducting operations in a responsible and sustainable manner that safeguards and promotes continual protection of the environment. For these reasons, the ECHO Program has been developed.

ECHO (Enhancing Cetacean Habitat and Observation) Program Overview

The Enhancing Cetacean Habitat and Observation (ECHO) Program is a Vancouver Fraser Port Authority-led initiative aimed at better understanding and managing the impact of shipping activities on at-risk whales throughout the southern coast of British Columbia. The long term goal of the ECHO Program is to develop mitigation measures that will lead to a quantifiable reduction in potential threats to whales as a result of shipping activities. The ECHO Program is one of the port authority's environmental programs which works to protect and minimize impacts to the environment.

Partners

The ECHO Program has benefited from early input and advice from scientists, shipping industries, conservation and environmental groups, First Nations individuals and government agencies to help the program focus efforts and set goals and objectives.

Projects

The ECHO Program supports a series of individual short-term projects, scientific studies and education initiatives. These projects will provide a better understanding of vessel-related cumulative regional threats, informing the development of mitigation solutions. Projects focus on three threat categories: acoustic disturbance (underwater noise), physical disturbance (vessel collision) and environmental contaminants. Working collaboratively with several partners, the ECHO Program has installed an underwater listening station in the Strait of Georgia, is working to monitor regional ambient underwater noise, has supported a large whale vessel strike-risk assessment and has developed a Mariner's Guide to Whales for the North West Pacific.

For Further Information

For further information about the ECHO Program, please visit portvancouver.com/echo or if you have specific questions, please email Environmental Programs at ECHO@portvancouver.com.

ECHO Program Collaborators

Advisory Working Group

BC Coast Pilots
BC Ferries
Chamber of Shipping of BC
Cruise Lines International Association
(North West & Canada)
Fisheries and Oceans Canada
First Nations individuals
Hemmera Envirochem Inc.
National Oceanic and Atmospheric
Administration (NOAA)
Pacific Pilotage Authority
Shipping Federation of Canada
Transport Canada
Vancouver Aquarium
Vancouver Fraser Port Authority
Washington State Ferries
WWF-Canada

Federal Government Advisory Committee

Environment Canada
Fisheries and Oceans Canada
Transport Canada
Vancouver Fraser Port Authority

Project Collaborators

All-Sea Enterprises
BC Coast Pilots
BC Ferries
Chamber of Shipping of BC
NOAA
Prince Rupert Port Authority
Seaspan
Vancouver Aquarium

Funding Contributors

Fraser River Pile and Dredge
Trans Mountain
Transport Canada
Vancouver Fraser Port Authority

Independent facilitation

Fraser Basin Council

Acoustic Technical Committee

Fisheries and Oceans Canada
JASCO Applied Sciences
NOAA
Oceans Networks Canada
Robert Allan Naval Architects
SMRU Consulting
Transport Canada
University of British Columbia
University of St. Andrews
Vancouver Aquarium
Washington State Ferries

Vessel Operators Committee

BC Coast Pilots
BC Ferries
Chamber of Shipping of BC
Cruise Lines International Association (North
West & Canada)
Hapag-Lloyd (Canada) Inc.
Holland America Group
Pacific Pilotage Authority
Shipping Federation of Canada
Transport Canada
Vancouver Fraser Port Authority
Washington State Ferries

Other Engagement

Achieve Quieter Oceans (AQUO)
Green Marine
Marine Environmental Observation Prediction
and Response Network (MEOPAR)
Nanaimo Port Authority
Ports of Seattle and Tacoma
Scripps Institution of Oceanography

Significant In-kind Contributors

Fisheries and Oceans Canada
JASCO Applied Sciences
Oceans Networks Canada
Vancouver Aquarium