



marine
connection

Statement of Concern on Noise Pollution

Environmental groups/MPs/MEPs/MSPs are calling on the UK's Ministry of Defence to abandon sonar testing around the UK coastline. Sonar 2087 trials took place between the 9-14th June 2004, near the Rockall Trenches, 300 miles from the Hebridean coast, Scotland. This area is 4,500 metres deep and has 90 species of fish. Blue, Fin, Humpback, Minke and Sperm whales have been recorded in the area along with numerous different species of dolphins. There was no public hearing with regards to these June trials even though the frequency and intensity of the sonar broadcast could have caused hearing loss and behavioural disruption in marine mammals. Experts worldwide have condemned the use of high intensity sonar in the marine environment.

Sonar 2087 consists of an array of speakers fastened to a central post that is lowered into the sea, capable of generating well over 200 decibels. There is a growing number of whale strandings around the world that are associated with active sonar. Pathologies similar to those observed in some of those animals have been found in whales and dolphins stranded off the UK. The species include Common and Risso's dolphins and a Blainville's beaked whale. This gives additional reason for caution with regards to Sonar 2087. There is obviously a track record of occasional problems and we need to know why or what has happened when such incidents occur. Public and scientific access to information regarding the impacts of Sonar 2087 on marine wildlife is vital.

There is some scientific information but simply just not enough of it on most aspects of acoustic impacts. The National Academies of Science in the US and also the US Office of Naval Research have recommended much more research be undertaken because so little is known about how marine mammals use sound and are affected by sound. Lawyers have identified the deployment of low frequency sonar as a possible violation of UNCLOS and other international treaties that protect the marine environment and resources. It is quite impossible with current mitigation measures to ascertain whether any marine mammal suffers from temporary or permanent threshold hearing loss due to sonar exposure. Cetaceans may experience gross damage to ears, damage to body tissue, masking of communication, interference with ability to acoustically interpret their environment and also interference with food finding. Long term effects caused by sonar are almost impossible to identify. Many whales that are fatally impacted can sink to the bottom of the ocean, therefore the true death toll cannot be estimated.

The Ministry of Defence is ignoring the Precautionary Principle and widespread concern about the danger of high intensity sonar to marine mammals, marine ecosystems and the health of our depleted oceans. Low frequency sonar can travel hundreds of miles through our oceans at considerable intensities. Given the lack of information available about this system, its potential impact on marine life, and the absence of transparency surrounding this issue, we the undersigned call for a moratorium on the further development of Sonar 2087 until there is sufficient information about the system.

Proper public hearings on the impact of this sonar need to be convened as a matter of urgency.

Signatories:

Acoustic Ecology Institute (USA)
Advocates for Animals (UK)
Animal Welfare Institute (USA)
Animalisti Italiani Onlus (ITALY)
Ark Angel Foundation (CANADA)
ASMS OceanCare (SWITZERLAND)
Australia for Animals (AUSTRALIA)
British Divers Marine Life Rescue (UK)
Campaign Whale (UK)
Captive Animals' Protection Society (UK)
Captive Dolphin Awareness Foundation (USA)
Cetacean Society International (USA)
CRRU (UK)
Dauphins Libres (BELGIUM)
Dolphin Project (USA)
Earth Island Institute (USA)
Elsa Nature Conservancy (JAPAN)
Environmental Investigation Agency (UK)
Friends of the Moray Firth Dolphins (UK)
Greenpeace (UK)
Humane Society of Canada (CANADA)
Humane Society International (USA)
International Dolphin Watch (UK)
Irish Seal Sanctuary (IRELAND)
Irish Whale & Dolphin Group (IRELAND)
La Societe Guernesaise (CHANNEL ISLANDS)
Marine Connection (UK)
Natural Resources Defense Council (USA)
Nature Trust (MALTA)
New York Whale and Dolphin Action League (USA)
Ocean Mammal Institute (USA)
Reseau Cetaces (FRANCE)
Seaflow (USA)
Sea Trust (S&W WALES)
Sea Turtle Restoration Project (USA)
Stop LFAS Worldwide Network (USA)
WDCS(UK)
World Society for the Protection of Animals (UK)
WWF (UK)
Zoocheck (CANADA)

Jean Lambert - Green Party MEP for London
Caroline Lucas - Green MEP for the South East Region
Baroness Miller of Chilthorne Domer
Ben Murray (Policy Officer) Scottish Green Party MSPs
Shiona Baird - Green MSP for North East Scotland
Chris Ballance -Green MSP for South of Scotland
Mark Ballard - Green MSP for Lothians
Robin Harper - Green MSP for Lothians
Patrick Harvie - Green MSP for Glasgow
Mark Ruskell - Green MSP for Mid-Scotland and Fife
Eleanor Scott - Green MSP for Highlands and Islands