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## Seismic blasting threatens B.C. marine life

**For immediate release**

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**SOINTULA, B.C.** — The public should be making a big noise over proposed seismic blasting that may injure or even kill marine life on the B.C. coast.

Environmental groups are urging Canadians to tell Ottawa they oppose the plan, which would see 36 high-pressure air guns fired into coastal waters every 20-60 seconds, 24 hours a day for three weeks.

“The proposed seismic blasting will be at volume levels loud enough to disrupt, injure or lead to the death of fish and marine mammals,” says Oonagh O’Connor of the Living Oceans Society. “The sound waves from these guns are strong enough to penetrate 50 km into the earth after traveling through the water.”

A team of American-led scientists wants to conduct the seismic testing in the waters off Burke and Dean Channels (between Bella Bella and Prince Rupert) as part of a study on how the Coast Mountains were formed. The “Batholiths Proposal” is primarily funded by the U.S. government.

The Batholiths Proposal needs to be approved by Canada’s Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council as well as the U.S.-based National Science Foundation, which is contributing \$4.5 million to the study.

The Canadian government is currently conducting an informal public comment period on the draft environmental assessment report. The public should tell Ottawa that the risks to whales and other marine life are just too great to approve the scheme – especially given the timing.

“There are a large number of humpback whales feeding in this area in the fall – exactly the time when this blasting would take place,” says Chris Genovali of the Raincoast Conservation Society. “The seismic testing would disrupt their feeding and could reduce the whales’ ability to have healthy offspring.”

Jay Ritchlin of the David Suzuki Foundation says, “Because the testing is proposed for narrow coastal inlets, humpbacks, harbour porpoises and other animals trying to avoid the noise may have difficulty escaping.”

The inlets are also nursery grounds for many juvenile fish species including rockfish, lingcod and sablefish. Salmon, particularly coho, chum, pink salmon and late run sockeye, will be migrating through the study area at the time of the proposed tests. High pressure sound can generate bubbles in the blood and fat tissue of fish, causing a fatal embolism to occur. Other negative effects may include destruction of eggs and larvae, and damage to fish with swim bladders, such as rockfish.

Over 800 concerned citizens have already written to the Canadian government to object to the Batholiths Proposal.

“Heightened public concern about seismic testing on the B.C. coast requires the Canadian government to ensure rigorous scientific scrutiny and full public review of the Batholiths Proposal,” says Lara Tessaro, Staff Lawyer with Sierra Legal.

The public comment period on the draft environmental assessment report closes December 31. Information about how to submit written comments is available at <http://www.livingoceans.org>.

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