

Dear OCR Community and Friends.

Dave Aplin from WWF sent the attached BBC article about a UN backed conference on ocean noise pollution. The article includes a quick synthesis of the main concerns and what we know. It is great that the issue has finally hit the UN and that international discussions are beginning to take place at a policy level.

A few years ago a number of us spent a week at the UN to get the issue heard. Included in our group was Cara Horowitz (NRDC), Susan Millward (Animal Welfare Institute), Marsha Green (International Ocean Noise Coalition), Lindy Weigart (Halifax University), and community member Rona Weintraub. We spent a week at the UN Informal Consultative Process On the Law Of the Sea (UNICPOLOS) hosting presentations and receptions, and collaring any delegates we could to hear our message.

After all of this effort we managed to get one sentence in the governing document. The sentence stated that "noise was energy pollution" and thus subject to consideration under the definitions and guidelines of energy pollution set forth in the Law of the Sea (which by the way, the U.S. has not ratified...)

So it is a with my delayed gratification that the UN is now engaging in this critical issue.

Amen!

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<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/7763906.stm>

Noisy oceans 'threaten sea life'

Increasing noise pollution in the world's oceans is threatening the survival of whales and dolphins, a UN-backed conference has heard.

Experts say the noises sea creatures use to communicate are being drowned out by noises from commercial shipping, new military sonar and climate change.

They become disoriented, cannot find mates or food and behave differently, scientists say.

Suggestions to cut noise include installing quieter engines.

The Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, which representatives from 100 countries are attending, is considering issuing a resolution that would oblige countries to reduce sound pollution.



Some whales show damage suggesting they surfaced too quickly, experts say

'Cocktail party'

Other suggested measures include re-routing shipping, cutting speed and banning tests and sonar use in the habitats of endangered animals.

Describing the increasing noise in oceans, Mark Simmonds from the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society said: "Call it a cocktail-party effect: you have to speak louder and louder until no-one can hear each other anymore."

He said there were a growing number of cases where the stranding of whales and dolphin could be linked to sound pollution.

In some cases, the mammals had tissue damage similar to divers who surface too quickly, leading scientists to suggest that they were scared by military sonar or seismic testing, and surfaced beyond their physical limits, he added.

Other research suggests that rising levels of carbon dioxide are increasing the acidity of the Earth's oceans, making sound travel further through sea water.

According to a report by the International Fund for Animal Welfare, the distance over which blue whales can communicate has been cut by 90% as a result of higher noise levels over the last 40 years.

A spokesman for the UN Environment Programme said governments seem ready to take action to alleviate the problems caused by noisy oceans.