

STRONGER LAWS FOR MARINE MAMMALS IN CANADA

Canada has no shortage of legal tools to protect marine mammals: marine protected areas (MPAs), species protection, and regulations for marine mammal viewing. Of the six laws governing marine protected areas, five provide the legal authority to restrict commercial fishing and vessel traffic within MPAs. West Coast Environmental Law is working to strengthen these legal tools and their implementation.

OCEANS ACT

Amendments to Canada's primary MPA law will step up legal protections for whales and other marine species, freeze the footprint of existing human activities in new interim MPAs, and require the precautionary approach to be applied when MPAs are created.



SPECIES AT RISK ACT

Designed to stop species from going extinct and help them recover, this law sets out the steps that must be taken to reverse species decline: identifying critical habitat, developing recovery strategies and action plans and implementing Critical Habitat Orders.



MARINE MAMMAL REGULATIONS (FISHERIES ACT)

Revisions to Canada's Marine Mammal Regulations in 2018 offer some increased protection for killer whales and other marine mammals from vessel traffic through increased minimum approach distances, though these revisions were in preparation for over a decade before being established.



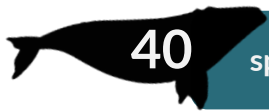
WHERE WE WORK

Northern Shelf Bioregion, northern Pacific coast of Canada: MPA network planning encompasses critical habitat of numerous marine mammals.

Salish Sea: The endangered Southern Resident Killer Whale population faces imminent threats. Recovery action planning includes noise management strategies, fisheries closures, and proposed new sanctuary areas.

Better implementation of these legal tools is needed to proactively protect marine mammal populations.

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40 species of marine mammal make the oceans around Canada their home.



14 populations of marine mammals are listed as Endangered or Threatened.



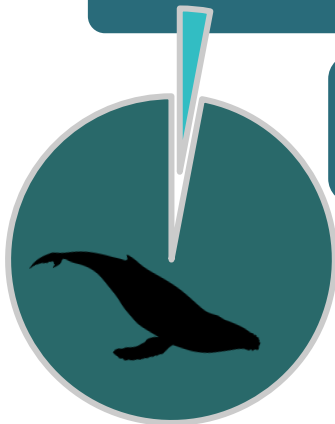
4 required Recovery Strategies have been completed on time for the listed populations.



0 required recovery Action Plans have been completed on time.

Stronger MPA laws are needed to protect marine mammals and their habitat.

3% of Canada's total marine area is within marine protected areas (MPAs).



17% of the area within MPAs prohibits commercial fishing.



10% of the area within MPAs prohibits commercial marine vessels.



3/11 MPAs designated by Fisheries and Oceans Canada have specific objectives relating to protecting marine mammals for their establishment, but even these three had few restrictions on commercial fishing, and had no restrictions on marine vessel traffic.

Stronger laws for Canada's MPAs should include protection standards that apply to all protected areas, meaningful protection for critical habitat of at risk species, and incorporation of measures for marine mammals into MPA network designations.