

Managing Marine Environmental Quality

TOGETHER TOWARDS HEALTHY OCEANS

OUR GOAL

Maintaining and improving the health of Canada's marine environment to help ensure the impacts of human activities can be managed sustainably.

WHAT WE DO

The Marine Environmental Quality (MEQ) program across Canada supports other planning and conservation initiatives such as [marine spatial planning](#) by developing management measures and providing advice. MEQ activities also support the effective management of [marine protected areas \(MPAs\)](#) and [other effective area-based conservation measures \(OECMs\)](#) in the marine environment.

HOW WE DO IT

The Marine Environmental Quality program has authority under the *Oceans Act* to use a variety of non-regulatory and regulatory tools such as objectives, criteria, guidelines, and standards and requirements to assess and manage human activities and their potential risks to species and the ecosystems that sustain them.

CONTACT US

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FIND OUT MORE

[MEQ Management](#) measures are supported by research and monitoring. [Learn more](#) about the research MEQ Science has been doing under the [Oceans Protection Plan](#).

MEQ MEASURE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

- 1 Understand the most pressing stressors on marine environmental quality
- 2 Evaluate existing management measures or mitigation strategies for effectiveness and identify gaps
- 3 Adjust existing measures and/or develop new ones

DID YOU KNOW?

Healthy oceans support biodiversity, help regulate the climate, provide sustenance, and are the basis for the [blue economy](#). To protect the health of marine animals and their habitats, it is important to ensure that current and future human activities such as shipping, resource extraction, travel and recreation, are managed to prevent and mitigate their impacts.

MITIGATING THE IMPACTS OF OCEAN NOISE

We're working with federal, provincial, territorial and Indigenous partners, and stakeholders to address underwater noise in Canada's marine ecosystems through the development of an Ocean Noise Strategy. The Strategy is intended to establish a whole-of-government approach that will build on current research to improve our understanding and management of ocean noise.

We're also leading a review and update of the [Statement of Canadian Practice with respect to the Mitigation of Seismic Sound in the Marine Environment](#) to incorporate the most recent research and reflect best international practices. This guidance will help to better protect ocean life from the potential impacts of seismic noise.



EXAMPLES OF MEQ INITIATIVES ACROSS CANADA

PACIFIC OCEAN

Pacific

Protecting endangered killer whales by reducing the impacts of underwater noise from commercial shipping, recreational vessels, and other noise sources.

ARCTIC OCEAN

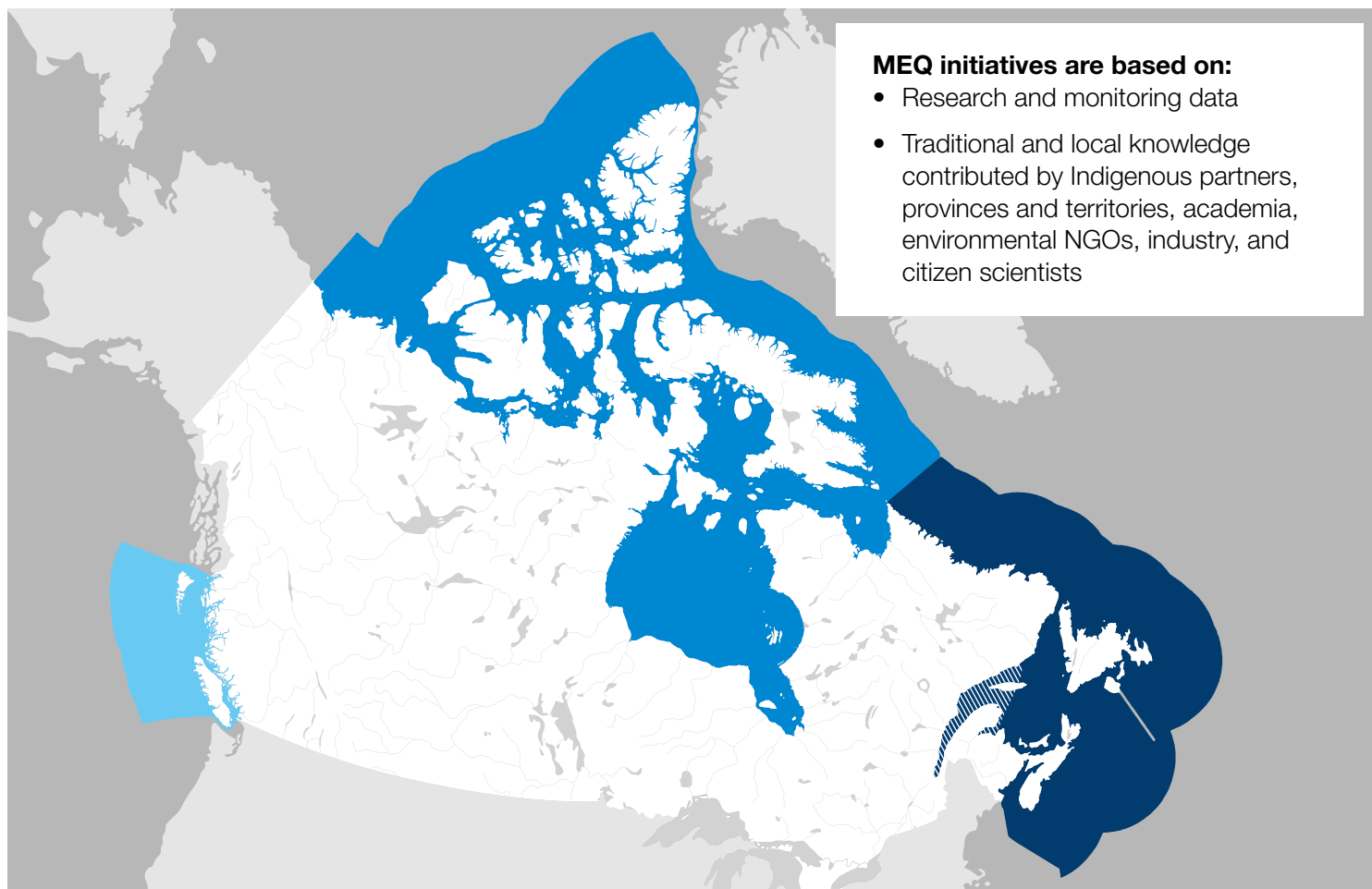
Arctic

Implementing a Notice to Mariners recommending vessels slow down to avoid sensitive areas for marine mammals. Developing pile-driving guidelines to help reduce impacts of underwater noise on Arctic species.

ATLANTIC OCEAN

Gulf

Collaborating with partners and stakeholders to study how nutrient enrichment impacts estuaries in the Northumberland Strait. Developing a guideline to promote efforts to address this issue.



MEQ initiatives are based on:

- Research and monitoring data
- Traditional and local knowledge contributed by Indigenous partners, provinces and territories, academia, environmental NGOs, industry, and citizen scientists

ATLANTIC OCEAN

Maritimes

Conducting acoustic monitoring to better understand levels of noise in the marine environment. Underwater recorders are deployed in strategic coastal locations to track how noise from human activities overlaps with the presence of whales. Management measures informed by this work will help protect endangered whales and noise-sensitive species.

ATLANTIC OCEAN

Newfoundland and Labrador

Working with DFO Science to collect visual and acoustic data to understand marine mammal habitat use. With partners at Memorial University, creating acoustic models to estimate the underwater noise risk for marine mammals and other species within Placentia Bay. Using storm-water traps to collect and monitor litter before it enters the ocean. These initiatives will inform the development of MEQ management measures.

ST. LAWRENCE ESTUARY

Quebec

Working to conserve endangered beluga and blue whales against threats such as ship strikes and underwater noise.

Contributing to the establishment of a marine protected area in the St. Lawrence Estuary.

Proposing conservation measures, including a voluntary slowdown of merchant marine vessels to protect marine mammals.