



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: APRIL 18, 2005

## Canadian Government Deaf to Seismic Science

**VICTORIA** - The federal government's draft regulations for seismic testing fall short of addressing negative impacts on the marine environment, according to Oil Free Coast, a national coalition of scientists, environmental groups and fisheries organizations. Fisheries and Oceans Canada released its draft *Statement of Canadian Practice on the Mitigation of Seismic Noise* February 19.

Seismic testing uses intense noise to locate oil and gas deposits beneath the sea floor. It has been shown to damage the hearing and disturb the reproduction, migration and feeding patterns of a wide range of marine species.

"The *Statement of Canadian Practice* makes claims that are scientifically indefensible and irresponsible given our current knowledge," said Dalhousie University whale researcher **Dr. Lindy Weilgart**. "It makes a mockery of science-based stewardship and fails to adequately protect the marine environment."

The timing of the document's release suggests that appeasing the oil and gas sector is behind the move to approve weak regulations – not marine protection. The release of the *Statement of Canadian Practice* coincides with a strong political push by industry and the B.C. government to begin seismic testing on the West Coast, despite B.C.'s moratorium on exploration.

"The B.C. government wants us to believe seismic testing is strictly for research, but Canadians should know that it's essentially a green light for the oil and gas industry to size up B.C.'s resources," said **Oonagh O'Connor**, Offshore Oil and Gas Campaign Coordinator for Living Oceans Society.

"I fear that this regulation is being hastily cobbled together before there can be more noise made about seismic, and before even more damning evidence is produced regarding the danger seismic poses to fish and fishing communities," said **Gretchen Fitzgerald** of the Ecology Action Centre.

The groups assert that the *Statement of Canadian Practice* is the product of a severely flawed process.

"As a review panel member, I experienced first-hand the bias, lack of balance and cherry-picking of the scientific literature," said Dr. Weilgart. "The oil and gas industry was heavily represented, yet there were no environmental organizations and few independent scientists present. It's not surprising that such a process produced a statement with so little precaution towards the marine environment."

The coalition, which comprises 105 organizations, is calling on Fisheries and Oceans Canada to abandon its draft *Statement of Canadian Practice on the Mitigation of Seismic Noise in the Marine Environment* and initiate an independent evaluation of the impacts of seismic testing.

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### For more information, contact:

Dr. Lindy Weilgart, Whale Researcher: Dept. of Biology, Dalhousie University: (902) 494-3723

Oonagh O'Connor, Living Oceans Society: (250) 973-6580

Gretchen Fitzgerald, Ecology Action Centre: (902) 494-2146

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## BACKGROUND: Seismic Testing

### About Seismic Testing

Seismic testing uses intense noise levels of approximately 230 decibels to locate deposits of oil and gas beneath the sea floor. Whales have been shown to avoid seismic noise at received levels of around 130 dB in water.

During seismic testing, air guns are fired at 11-second intervals, 24 hours per day, creating a din that can cause physiological damage to marine mammals, sea turtles, fish and invertebrates.

Seismic testing has also been shown to negatively affect the mating, migration, and feeding patterns of a wide range of marine species.

### About Oil Free Coast Alliance

The Oil Free Coast Alliance is a coalition of 105 organizations who together are calling on the federal and provincial governments to maintain the moratorium on offshore oil and gas in British Columbia. Member organizations include the David Suzuki Foundation, Ecology Action Centre, Georgia Strait Alliance, Greenpeace, Living Oceans Society, Sierra Club of Canada (BC Chapter), West Coast Environmental Law, and Western Canada Wilderness Committee.

For more information on the Oil Free Coast Alliance, see [www.oilfreecoast.org](http://www.oilfreecoast.org)

### Additional information

Fisheries and Oceans Canada's *Statement of Canadian Practice on the Mitigation of Seismic Noise in the Marine Environment* can be downloaded from:

[www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/canwaters-eauxcan/infocentre/media/seismic-sismique/intro\\_e.asp](http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/canwaters-eauxcan/infocentre/media/seismic-sismique/intro_e.asp)

Reports on the impacts of seismic testing can be found at:

[www.http://www.livingoceans.org/library/index.shtml#offshore](http://www.livingoceans.org/library/index.shtml#offshore)