

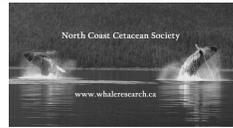


Healthy Oceans. Healthy Communities.



David  
Suzuki  
Foundation

SOLUTIONS ARE IN OUR NATURE



SIERRA LEGAL  
advocates for the environment

## Federal agency rejects funding for controversial seismic testing

March 9, 2007

**Vancouver, BC** – BC environmental groups are applauding the decision by Canada’s Natural Science and Engineering Research Council (NSERC) to withdraw funding for the Batholiths Project that proposed harmful seismic blasting in North Coast waters, which are home to a rich diversity of marine life, including humpback whales, orcas and many stocks of migrating salmon.

“We are pleased that NSERC decided to withdraw funding based on the advice of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) marine scientists, and international scientists who warned that seismic testing in these channels poses a serious risk to humpback whales, fin whales, orcas and other marine life,” says Oonagh O’Connor of Living Oceans Society.

Because the Batholiths proponents had requested funding from NSERC, the environmental organizations are hopeful that the withdrawal of funding means the controversial project will not proceed. For the project to go ahead, DFO would need to issue permits under the *Species at Risk Act* and the *Fisheries Act* that would allow the researchers to harm and harass endangered marine species.

“We expect DFO to do the right thing and not issue permits,” says Chris Genovali of Raincoast Conservation Society. “It is noteworthy that well over 1,000 citizens have written to the Canadian government expressing their objections to the Batholiths proposal on the basis that it would be harmful to marine life and set a dangerous precedent for seismic testing on the BC coast.”

Salmon migrate through the proposed testing area, which includes nursery grounds for many juvenile fish species. Much of the proposed seismic blasting would occur in narrow coastal inlets which increases the potential for harm because humpbacks, harbour porpoises and other animals trying to avoid the noise may have difficulty escaping.

“Seismic testing, whether for academic study or to locate oil and gas, presents unacceptable risks to important parts of BC’s environment and economy,” says Jay Ritchlin of the David Suzuki Foundation. “NSERC’s decision supports the protection of BC’s coastal waters and we hope it puts an end to any proposals to use seismic testing here.”

The Batholiths Project, led by U.S. academics, aims to use some of the world’s loudest air gun arrays 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 project would involve firing 36 high-pressure air guns into coastal waters every 20-60 seconds, 24 hours a day for three weeks.

“The decision by NSERC to withdraw funding for the Batholiths project is great news for all marine mammals and fish inhabiting the coastal waters of BC,” says Hermann Meuter of the North Coast Cetacean Society. “It is a great relief to coastal communities and all those who depend on marine resources.”

**For more information contact:**

Oonagh O'Connor, Offshore Oil and Gas Campaign Coordinator  
Living Oceans Society  
Ph: 250-230-6580

Jay Ritchlin, Marine Conservation Specialist  
David Suzuki Foundation  
Ph: 604 961-6840

Christianne Wilhelmson, Program Coordinator  
Georgia Strait Alliance  
Ph: 604-633-0530 or 604 862-7579 (cell)

Chris Genovali, Executive Director  
Raincoast Conservation Society  
Ph: 250-655-1229  
C: 250-888-3579

Lara Tessaro, Staff Lawyer,  
Sierra Legal  
Ph: 604 685 5618 ext 245

Hermann Meuter, President  
North Coast Cetacean Society  
cetacealab@hughes.net