An IMO project under the Technical Cooperation and Implementation Division

GloNoise Partnership

Guide for the development of a national **Stakeholder Engagement Plan** for the mitigation of underwater radiated noise from shipping

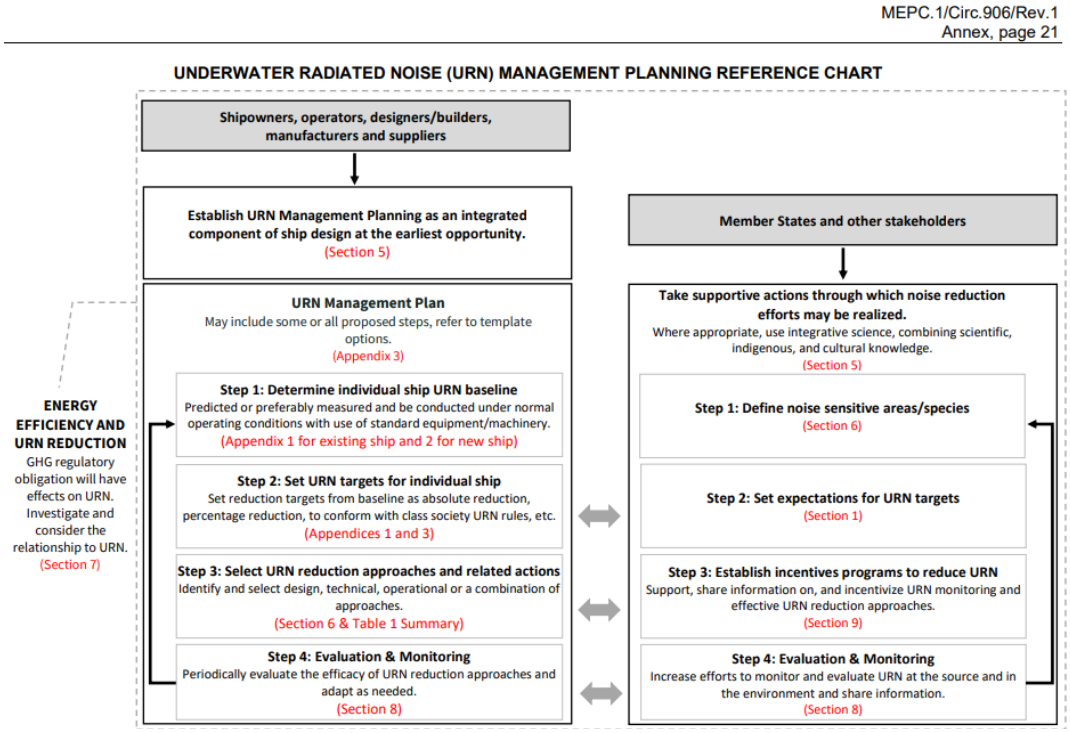
1 INTRODUCTION

Effective stakeholder engagement is essential to the success, ownership, and long-term sustainability of initiatives addressing environmental challenges. In the context of underwater radiated noise (URN) from shipping and its impacts on marine ecosystems, inclusive and coordinated engagement enables countries to identify priorities, co-develop solutions, and build alignment between national and global marine protection efforts.

The Guide for the Development of a National Stakeholder Engagement Plan has been developed under the framework of the GEF-UNDP-IMO Global Partnership for Mitigation of Underwater Noise from Shipping (GloNoise Partnership Project). The Project supports six Lead Pilot Countries, respectively Argentina, Chile, Costa Rica, India, South Africa, and Trinidad and Tobago and three Twinning Countries; Georgia, Malaysia, and Madagascar in advancing their understanding of URN and developing context-specific mitigation strategies. Rooted in the principles of the GEF-7 Stakeholder Engagement Policy (SD/PL/01), the GloNoise Partnership promotes inclusive, gender-responsive, and results-oriented collaboration, in line with the International Waters Focal Area of GEF-7.

This guide provides practical methodologies and tools to identify, analyse, and engage stakeholders in the design and implementation of national actions to reduce URN. It is intended to serve IMO Member States interested in strengthening their approaches to URN management and mitigation. Recognizing that each country operates under distinct technical, institutional, and ecological conditions, the guide promotes adaptable, evidence-based frameworks that connect science, policy, and practice across administrations, industry, academia, and coastal communities.

Importantly, this guide complements the Revised guidelines for the reduction of underwater radiated noise from commercial shipping to address adverse impacts on marine life (MEPC.1/Circ.906/Rev.1), particularly by supporting the practical implementation of the URN Management Plan. The guide provides a participatory framework to help Member States operationalize the planning process outlined in the Revised Guidelines, including the collaborative elements reflected in the URN Management Plan Reference Chart. As underscored in the Revised Guidelines, effective URN management requires active participation and coordination among maritime administrations, shipowners, classification societies, port authorities, shipbuilders, researchers, and other relevant stakeholders.



By facilitating such engagement, this guide helps countries translate the principles of the Revised Guidelines into coherent, transparent, and evidence-based national action. It encourages structured dialogue and shared responsibility across all actors, ensuring that efforts to manage URN are not only technically sound but also socially inclusive and institutionally embedded—bridging global policy commitments with practical, locally grounded implementation.

2 STAKEHOLDER IDENTIFICATION

URN can have negative impacts on a variety of marine life, from benthic invertebrates to the largest whales. Marine life are undoubtedly the most important stakeholders in any URN reduction efforts, but do not have a voice. In this context, the most likely stakeholders to represent marine life are non-profit environmental groups, government agencies responsible for the protection of the marine environment, or those companies and individuals (such as fishers or ecotourism operators) whose livelihood may be affected by a reduction in the health and well-being of marine life.

The other key stakeholders in the reduction of URN are those whose activities generate URN that may be affecting the marine environment. These are likely to include the shipping industry, ferry and cruise traffic, commercial fisheries, mineral or gas exploration and others.

Government organizations play a key role in regulating and managing the movement of people and goods and ensuring a prosperous economy for their country whilst protecting the marine environment.

Through the GloNoise Partnership Project, each Lead Pilot Country (LPC) established a National Task Force (NTF) responsible for overseeing the capacity building activities and ensuring key stakeholders are involved in the project. The composition of the National Task Force may vary for each country based on who is leading the URN mitigation, but will likely include:

- Government officials responsible for ship traffic (e.g. Ministry of Transport, Navy, Coast Guard, Port Authorities etc.)
- Government officials responsible for the protection of aquatic life or Marine Protected Areas (e.g. Ministry of Fisheries, Ministry of Earth Sciences, National Parks Department etc.)
- Universities or academic institutions with relevant experience related to aquatic species, underwater acoustics or naval architecture.
- Non-profit organizations with an interest in ocean conservation
- Representatives from the shipping industry such as ship owner/ operator associations

The stakeholder identification questionnaire, provided as Appendix A, is to be filled out in electronic form by country and has been developed to help each country identify potential stakeholders regarding URN. The key stakeholder categories and sub-categories included in the stakeholder identification questionnaire include:

- Shipping (including transportation of goods and ship design, repair, building and certification)
- Other vessel traffic (ecotourism and passenger transport, commercial fishing, exploration and construction)
- Government
- Academia
- Environmental non-profit organizations
- Vulnerable groups

Not all categories of stakeholders will be applicable for every country, and some identified stakeholder groups may have little or no impact on URN.

Once each country completes the stakeholder identification questionnaire, the next step is to evaluate the stakeholders based on level of influence and interest/ engagement in the topic of URN.

3 STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

3.1 Interest and engagement

Identifying the level of interest and potential engagement of each stakeholder is the next step. Four levels have been identified. Stakeholders may or may not be fully aware of the issues related to the effects of URN on the environment, and this should be identified at the outset, to allow for focussed outreach and education. For each stakeholder identified, their level interest and engagement should be assessed as one of the following:

- ☐ Leading: A leading stakeholder is aware of the issue and is already actively involved. In the case of the GloNoise Partnership Project, these stakeholders would be the focal point organizations/ government agencies and possibly others from the NTF.
- ☐ Supporting: A supporting stakeholder is aware of URN, and interested in engaging and participating, but may not have the resources or inclination to lead, and may be involved in the NTF, or an alternate committee.
- ☐ Resistant: A resistant stakeholder is aware of issue, but may be resistant to get involved or potentially is in opposition to changes that may arise from the issue at hand.
- ☐ Unaware: An unaware stakeholder does not know about URN, the effects on marine life, and how their activities are involved.

By assessing stakeholders according to these categories, focal points and national authorities can develop more effective engagement strategies that promote inclusiveness, reduce opposition, and mobilize support across sectors. A stakeholder profile list spreadsheet tool for tracking stakeholder interest, influence etc. has been developed and is provided as Appendix B.

3.2 Influence

Following the identification of interest and engagement, is the assessment of potential influence. The level of influence of each stakeholder regarding URN reduction may be challenging to evaluate initially, will differ between countries, and may well change over time. Four levels have been identified. For each stakeholder identified, their influence should be assessed as:

- ☐ Very high: A stakeholder with very high influence has significant control over how URN reduction may be implemented in the future. Government agencies with the ability to set regulations on URN would fall into this category.
- ☐ High: A stakeholder with high influence can directly support the reduction of URN and can influence others to also act. An example of this may be a large national shipbuilder, or a shipping company with a high number of transits.
- ☐ Medium: A stakeholder with medium influence may be a contributor to URN, may be involved in the assessment/ evaluation of URN, conducts research to support decision-making, conducts educational activities etc.

- ☐ Low: A stakeholder with low influence may have high interest or engagement, but limited ability to affect change regarding URN

3.3 Information type and communication needs

Each stakeholder will be unique in their level of knowledge of URN. To meet the stakeholder where they are in their understanding of the issue, avoid redundancy and ensure effective communication, an evaluation of the information required and the method by which a stakeholder best receives information should be conducted. Not all stakeholders will require an in-depth understanding URN, whereas other stakeholders may need to fully understand the technical aspects of the emission and propagation of sound.

The communication needs for each stakeholder are closely associated to the type of information each requires to participate in URN reduction. As such these vary from intensive training or university-level courses to newsletters or email updates which may be sufficient for those with minimal information needs. For each stakeholder identified, their required information type and communication needs should be assessed as:

- ☐ Extensive: A stakeholder involved in the technical aspects of URN reduction (i.e. ship designer, researcher) will require a more extensive understanding of URN, which may require intensive training.
- ☐ Moderate: A stakeholder involved in decision or policy making, will require a moderate level of information on URN effects and reduction techniques such as workshops, webinars and meeting participation.
- ☐ Minimal: A stakeholder who will not be involved in decision-making, or who may have low interest and/or low influence will require a minimal amount of information more along the lines of general awareness of URN which may be disseminated through presentations or newsletters.

3.4 Stakeholder profiles

Once stakeholders are identified and assessed for engagement, influence information type and communication needs, a stakeholder profile should be created for each. These should be identified at an organization/ corporation level initially, then followed up with contact information for an individual, with a focus on gender inclusivity. A stakeholder profile list spreadsheet tool (provided as Appendix B) should be completed with the following information:

- ☐ Stakeholder organization: name of company/ organization
- ☐ Stakeholder category: as per questionnaire
- ☐ Interest and engagement level: as defined above
- ☐ Influence level: as defined above
- ☐ Information type and communication needs: as defined above
- ☐ Stakeholder contact information: name/ email address when available

4. ENGAGEMENT PLAN

Once most stakeholders have been identified, a plan outlining methods and frequency of communication and engagement can be developed. In general, the plan should include objectives, roles, methods and frequency of engagement. Additionally, consideration should be given to evaluating the progress and effectiveness of stakeholder engagement, and provide for risk mitigation strategies, should stakeholders be resistant to participation.

4.1 Objectives

Understanding each country's goals towards URN reduction and engagement objectives is key to engaging in the right way.

Some possible objectives for each country pertaining to the overall reduction of URN may be:

1. Inform stakeholders of the effects of URN on marine life
2. Build relationships with national and international stakeholders
3. Learn from others globally on advancements in URN reduction
4. Find leaders and/or industry champions to help advance work
5. Facilitate decision-making and development of guidelines and/or regulations

4.2 Roles

A very important aspect to engagement is defining roles.

Some questions to consider:

- Who will be responsible for leading engagement?
- Will this be different for different groups of stakeholders?
- Will there be dedicated resources within a lead agency?

As articulated in Section 2, each country may establish a National Task Force to govern engagement of relevant stakeholders as in the example of GloNoise Partnership Project.

Once each country completes the stakeholder identification questionnaire and stakeholder profile list to identify and analyze potential stakeholders, the next step will be to consider how and when to engage each of these groups. Through the stakeholder identification and analysis, sub-groups with different knowledge, skills and influence will likely be identified. Depending on the objectives of each country, as well as the size of the country, consideration should be given to the creation of additional committees outside of the NTF, with specific work plans or goals in mind. Stakeholders who are identified as having high interest and high influence should be considered for participation in the NTF, or if not appropriate for the NTF, should be included as part of a committee.

Bringing a diversity of stakeholders together to learn and discuss URN at the NTF level is very important. However, to accomplish specific goals or tasks, more specific committees may need to be established. A few examples of such committees may be:

- ☐ Research committee: Bringing multiple academic and non-profit organizations together to discuss the status of research on URN and develop research projects. Such a committee would discuss URN and effects on aquatic life at a technical level that may not be necessary or beneficial for policymakers or ship-owners.
- ☐ Shipping committee: Having ship owners, operators, builders, port authorities and others within the industry convene to discuss the logistical, navigational and economic factors associated with potential URN reduction measures for cargo ships.
- ☐ Fishing and ecotourism committee: For some countries, fishing (whether commercial or artisanal) and ecotourism are significant components of their economy. These vessels are generally smaller and have different operational profiles than cargo ships, and their livelihoods are more

connected to a healthy ecosystem.

- ☐ Policy committee: When considering policy or regulation pertaining to URN reduction, having a committee of those governing organizations who create the policy and regulation, and those involved in the creation and management of the country's strategic priorities may be beneficial.

Creating terms of reference for each committee, including the NTF, is recommended. These terms of reference need not be extensive, but should include the following key components to ensure committees are effective:

- Purpose of forming the committee
- Duties/ mandate of the committee
- Expected membership (list organizations, not individuals)
- Expected duration and number of meetings
- Identification of the Chair and Secretariat (generally the country focal points)

If additional committees outside the NTF are created with the intent of advancing specific tasks, it is important to have a committee representative also on the NTF to ensure progress of the committees is effectively communicated among each other.

4.3 Methods

There are a variety of communication and engagement methods that can be used, and will vary for the different stakeholders, depending on the level of interest and influence of each. Some of these are listed below:

- ☐ Learning workshops or webinars: sessions where external and internal experts provide information and stakeholders are given the opportunity to ask questions
- ☐ Interactive workshops: sessions to engage the stakeholders, gather input on key questions, and support decision-making
- ☐ Meetings: regularly scheduled meetings of leaders and decision-makers to evaluate progress and advance work
- ☐ Newsletters: periodic newsletters to keep stakeholders informed about work being conducted
- ☐ Video clips: short videos (two minutes or less) on social media or similar platforms
- ☐ Email updates: short updates on progress or issues

When bringing different groups of stakeholders, potentially with disparate opinions and objectives together towards a common goal, engaging an impartial facilitator for larger workshops or meetings can be very beneficial.

4.4 Frequency of engagement

The communication and engagement plan should outline how often stakeholders are provided information or asked to participate in events. This may vary from annual learning workshops to quarterly meetings of key stakeholders, to as frequently as weekly email updates among those leading the work.

4.5 Evaluation

Once an engagement and communication plan has been developed, and work is progressing, it will be important to evaluate the effectiveness of the plan. Questions to consider in evaluating the plan include: Do stakeholders

remain engaged and interested? Is there stakeholder fatigue, or has interest been improved and stakeholders are seeking more engagement? Is progress being made on education and training regarding the issue of URN?

Evaluating the effectiveness of the plan may be done through formal (such as a survey) or informal (discussions) requests for feedback from the stakeholders. Additionally, consideration should be given to defining and tracking metrics such as number of persons attending a webinar or meeting, number of newsletter subscriptions etc.

4.6 Risk mitigation

In the process of identifying stakeholders, some may be identified as resistant. Strategies to mitigate the risk of non-participation from these stakeholders should be developed. Resistant stakeholders may be:

- Not aware they are contributing to URN
- Not aware of the risks posed to marine life from URN
- Have a communication barrier
- Have concerns that addressing URN will have negative implications to their business or livelihood

Key strategies to mitigate the risks associated with resistant stakeholders include:

- Engage stakeholders early and often to prevent misunderstandings and resistance
- Provide resources and information at the appropriate level of stakeholder understanding
- Take the necessary time to build trust with stakeholders
- Be transparent in communication
- Listen to concerns and feedback of stakeholders, and take these into account in decision-making, allowing stakeholders to be part of solutions
- Continuously improve engagement strategies based on stakeholder feedback.

5. CONCLUSION

Identifying stakeholders, engaging early, providing information at the right level for each stakeholder, maintaining transparent communication, and providing stakeholders a voice in finding solutions will be key to the reduction of URN. This document serves as guide for documenting stakeholder involvement, influence, and communication strategies to build a simple yet robust stakeholder engagement plan.

The flowchart on the following page provides as an example the steps taken for development of Stakeholder Engagement Plans for LPCs under the GloNoise Partnership Project.

APPENDIX A

GLONOISE STAKEHOLDER IDENTIFICATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Responses should pertain to the marine environment, not interior/ inland waterways vessel traffic at this time.

Shipping

1. What are your country's main imports and exports transported by sea, and how are these commodities transported?

Commodity (eg: Grain)	**Import or Export**	**Containerized or bulk**

2. Please provide a breakdown of annual shipping traffic* by vessel type based on the following general categories:

Vessel Type (eg: Container ship, Bulk etc.)	**Approximate % of annual traffic** (eg: 25 %)

3. List any shipping organizations, associations or similar stakeholders headquartered or operating in your country. (eg: National Shipowners' Association, Shipping Federation)

4. List five or more shipping companies/ organizations operating in your country, preferably those with the highest cargo volume or number of transits. (eg: Shipping Company)

5. Is there a requirement for pilotage by local pilots/ captains knowledgeable of the region/ port upon arrival, or do international ship captains transit directly to port. (If local pilotage, list organization)

pilotage	**Organization if local pilotage** (eg: Pilotage Authority)

Ship building, design, repair, certification

6. Does your country have a commercial shipbuilding, repair or design industry, either via private companies or state-operated?

Yes / No	Ship building, repair or design	Private or state

7. List five or more ship building, design or repair companies operating in your country, preferably those with the highest output. (eg: Shipyards)

8. If there are manufacturers of marine technologies (i.e. propellers, hull paints) operating in your country, please list below:

9. Does your country have a national ship classification society, or other commercial ship classification societies with offices/ operating within your country? If yes, please list them below:(eg: Classification Societies)

Other vessel traffic

Tourism and passenger transport

10. If your country has a significant international cruise industry, list major ports/regions and number of annual calls.

Region/ port	Approximate # annual calls (eg: 800)

11. If your country has a significant international cruise industry, list major ports/regions and number of annual calls.

Region/ port	Approximate # annual calls (eg: 10,000)

12. List the major cruise and/or ferry companies operating in your country:

13. If your country has a significant tourism by large private vessels (yachts), please list major areas of operation. (eg: ports)

14. If your country has a significant ecotourism industry (wildlife viewing, dive/snorkel trips), list major areas of operation and approximate number of ecotourism companies operating.

Port/ region for eco-tourism	Approximate # of companies operating (eg:5)

Fishing

15. If your country has a large commercial fishing industry, list major areas of operation and approximate number of commercial fishing companies operating.

Port/ region for commercial fishing	Approximate # of companies operating (eg: 25)

16. List the major commercial fishing companies operating in your country:

17. Is there significant recreational or subsistence fishing by individuals in your country?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please comment on the nature and general quantity of recreational/ subsistence fishing.
(eg: Hundreds of individual non-motorized fishing vessels depart from Region X daily, year round)

Exploration and construction

18. Is there significant offshore oil and gas or mineral exploration in your country?

☐ Yes ☐ No

19. If yes to question 18, list general geographic areas, type of exploration and lead company/ organization.

Geographic area	Exploration type (eg: Oil extraction)	Lead organization

20. If there are current or planned significant construction projects nearshore (i.e. port expansion) or offshore (i.e. wind farms), list general geographic areas, type of construction and lead company/ organization.

Geographic area	Construction type (eg: Container terminal expansion)	Lead organization

Government

21. List government agencies/organizations responsible for regulating and/or managing shipping traffic (i.e coast guard).

Agency/ organization	Are they national, regional or municipal?

22. List government agencies/ organizations responsible for regulating ports.

Agency/ organization	Are they national, regional or municipal?

23. List government agencies/ organizations responsible for protecting marine life.

Agency/ organization	Are they national, regional or municipal?

24. Underwater radiated noise (URN) is not widely regulated. In your country, if regulations were to be developed related to URN, which of the agencies above would be responsible?
(eg: Department of Transportation)

Academia, NGO, vulnerable

Academia

25. Please list below the academic institutions in your country/ region, and whether they have previously conduct studies related to underwater radiated noise (URN), or the potential/ knowledge base to do so.

Academic institution	**Studies completed or potential** (eg: URN studies completed I)

Non-profit

26. Please list the main non-profit organizations (NGOs) in your country/ region with a focus on protection of marine life.

27. List national or international NGOs that have completed underwater radiated noise studies in your country (i.e. WWF).

Vulnerable groups/ communities

28. Are you aware of any vulnerable groups or communities that may be adversely impacted by the effects of underwater radiated noise on marine life? Please identify vulnerable group(s) and comment on potential negative impacts. (eg: Local Indigenous communities rely on traditional harvest of fish and seals, and URN may be reducing presence of these species)

CLICK to clear form

APPENDIX B Stakeholder profile list (insert more rows as needed)

Stakeholder category (Choose from dropdown)	**Stakeholder organization**	**Interest and engagement level** (Choose from dropdown)	**Influence level** (Choose from dropdown)	**Information and communication** (Choose from dropdown)	**Contact information - name**	**Contact information - email address**	**Candidate for committee?**

CLICK to clear form

Stakeholder category (Choose from dropdown)	**Stakeholder organization**	**Interest and engagement level** (Choose from dropdown)	**Influence level** (Choose from dropdown)	**Information and communication** (Choose from dropdown)	**Contact information - name**	**Contact information - email address**	**Candidate for committee?**

APPENDIX C:

CASE STUDY: CANADA'S APPROACH TO STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION ON UNDERWATER RADIATED NOISE FOR SOUTHERN RESIDENT KILLER WHALES

Canada's efforts to reduce underwater radiated noise (URN) is collaborative and adaptive reflecting current science and technical advice, and guided by Indigenous communities and organizations, industry, conservation and environmental groups as well as public input. Through the Oceans Protection Plan (2016) and the Whales Initiative (2018 and 2023), Canada has prioritized the protection of marine life—including the endangered Southern Resident killer whale (SRKW), a population of just 75 individuals whose critical habitat overlaps with major shipping lanes for Large Commercial Vessels (LCVs) that service ports in British Columbia and Washington State. The Salish Sea is also home to numerous other vessel sources of acoustic and physical disturbance including ferries, recreational, fishing and whale watching vessels.

Key threats to SRKW include reduced prey availability and accessibility, acoustic (underwater radiate noise) and physical disturbance, and contaminants. Canada's Species at Risk Action Plan (2017) identified these risks and funding, regulations and voluntary programs to address these threats have been put in place and continue to be adapted on an annual basis. Addressing these threats requires engagement and collaboration across jurisdictions and regulatory frameworks, and Transport Canada works with multiple partners in both Canada and the United States as well as at the international level to effectively reduce vessel noise and disturbance impacting SRKW.

ECHO Program: Voluntary Collaboration for Large Commercial Vessels

Transport Canada, in partnership with the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority's Enhancing Cetacean Habitat and Observation (ECHO) Program, plays a central role in coordinating stakeholder engagement to reduce URN impacts in SRKW habitat.

Launched in 2014 by the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority, the ECHO Program aims to reduce threats to whales from commercial shipping through a voluntary, adaptive, and collaborative approach. In 2019, ECHO formalized its efforts through a Conservation Agreement with the Government of Canada and six marine industry organizations—renewed in 2024—resulting in up to 50% reductions in underwater noise in key areas of SRKW habitat.

ECHO's governance structure includes four key committees:

- Advisory Working Group (AWG) – provides strategic guidance; meets quarterly.
- Conservation Agreement Management Committee (CAM) – oversees agreement implementation.
- Vessel Operators Committee (VOC) – supports planning and communication of on-water measures.
- Acoustic Technical Committee (ATC) – advises on acoustic research and methodologies.

Membership spans industry, government (Canada and U.S.), Indigenous representatives, scientists, and NGOs. All groups operate under clear Terms of Reference, and communication is maintained through hybrid meetings, newsletters, webinars, and the ECHO website.

What works well	Areas for Improvement
Trust and Transparency: Strong leadership, clear roles, consistent processes, and transparent communication foster trust. **Inclusive and Effective Engagement:** Neutral facilitation, clear Terms of Reference, and high participation rates support meaningful collaboration. **Evidence-Based Approach:** Research to address knowledge gaps and clear presentation of scientific findings enable informed decisions. **Collaborative Action:** Joint planning and testing of measures encourage innovation and progress despite uncertainty. **Adaptive and Responsive Design:** Incorporating advisor feedback into program direction builds ownership and supports continuous improvement. **Open Communication:** Publishing results and lessons learned enhances credibility and future buy-in.	**Balancing Urgency with Capacity:** The ongoing designation of the species as under "Imminent Threat" creates pressure to accelerate progress, which is difficult to sustain within a voluntary framework. **Maintaining Engagement Amid Complexity:** As related initiatives expand across the region, keeping participation high becomes harder due to overlapping efforts, potential confusion, and stakeholder fatigue. **Improving Representation:** Despite progress, advisory group composition remains skewed toward industry, with continued need to strengthen First Nations and Environmental Non-Governmental Organization involvement.

Canada's Collaborative Approach to SRKW Recovery and Small Vessel Management

While the ECHO Program focuses on Large Commercial Vessels, Transport Canada leads complementary initiatives targeting smaller recreational, fishing and whale-watching vessels. These efforts are part of a broader, multi-tiered governance framework involving multiple federal departments to support recovery measures for SRKW.

- Indigenous and Multi-Stakeholder Advisory Group (IMAG): Formed in June 2018 as the overarching forum to advise on recovery efforts. IMAG meets 2–3 times annually.
- Technical Working Groups (TWGs): Led by federal departments, including Transport Canada, TWGs meet 1–2 times per year to develop high-priority mitigation measures addressing prey availability, contaminants, and vessel disturbance. They include experts from government, Indigenous communities, NGOs, and academia, and prioritize alignment with U.S. efforts. TWGs operate collaboratively but are not required to reach full consensus.
- Tier II Multi-Nation Group (MNG): Established in 2020 to serve as a forum through which to engage with First Nations whose marine territories overlap with SRKW habitat. MNG meets prior to IMAG to inform planning and ministerial recommendations, focusing on potential impacts and mitigation of proposed measures. Consultation takes place via nation-to-nation meetings prior to final decision making to identify whether there may be impacts to Indigenous rights and title, and if so, to address these impacts.

These bodies collectively inform annual mitigation measures, which are evaluated for ecological benefit, Indigenous rights impacts, feasibility, and socio-economic considerations before being approved and publicly communicated.

Since 2019, Transport Canada has implemented annual mandatory and voluntary measures—via Interim Orders under the Canada Shipping Act, 2001—to reduce physical and acoustic impacts from recreational, fishing, and

whale-watching vessels. These measures complement ECHO Program efforts and evolve based on new science, Indigenous feedback, SRKW sightings, enforcement data, and compliance monitoring. While not all measures are acoustically assessed each year, proxy data helps evaluate their effectiveness in supporting SRKW recovery.

What works well	Areas for Improvement
Early Indigenous Engagement: Involving Indigenous communities from the outset strengthens measure design and supports reconciliation. **Inclusive Dialogue:** Creating space for all voices—even if not all recommendations are adopted—builds trust and fosters compromise. **Evidence-Informed Decision-Making:** Weighing ecological, social, and feasibility factors leads to more robust and balanced measures. **Precautionary Approach:** Acting on best available knowledge, even amid uncertainty, enables timely and adaptive responses.	**Representation and Influence:** Need for inclusive dialogue across diverse perspectives; complexity of aligning vessel noise action with other environmental pressures (e.g., prey, contaminants, other noise sources). **Transparency in Trade-offs:** Clarifying how competing interests are balanced can improve understanding and buy-in. **Ongoing Adaptation:** Continued engagement is needed to refine measures as new science, data, and perspectives emerge.

Lessons Learned from Canada's Experience

Canada's approach to stakeholder engagement and consultation for URN mitigation evolved in response to complex environmental and socio-economic pressures. Starting with advisory committees with defined objectives helped build trust and guide participation. Over time, Canada expanded its model by adding technical subcommittees to benefit from scientific and technical input and advice that is obtained from technical experts both inside and outside Canada given the transboundary nature of the SRKW. Transparent communication and evidence-based decision-making are essential to maintaining credibility. Early and sustained Indigenous involvement enrich measure design and supported reconciliation. Processes are allowed to evolve, with inclusive dialogue remaining central even when consensus is not reached.

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