

**APPENDIX D**  
**REVIEW OF POTENTIAL EFFECTS OF AIRGUN SOUND ON FISH<sup>1</sup>**  
**AND MARINE INVERTEBRATES<sup>2</sup>**

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## 1. Fish

Here we review literature about the effects of airgun sounds on fish during seismic surveys. The potential effect of seismic sounds on fish has been studied with a variety of taxa, including marine, freshwater, and anadromous species (reviewed by Fay and Popper 2000; Ladich and Popper 2004; Hastings and Popper 2005; Popper and Hastings 2009a,b).

It is sometimes difficult to interpret studies on the effects of underwater sound on marine animals because authors often do not provide enough information, including received sound levels, source sound levels, and specific characteristics of the sound. Specific characteristics of the sound include units and references, whether the sound is continuous or impulsive, and its frequency range. Underwater sound pressure levels are typically reported as a number of decibels referenced to a reference level, usually 1 micro-Pascal ( $\mu\text{Pa}$ ). However, the sound pressure dB number can represent multiple types of measurements, including “zero to peak”, “peak to peak”, or averaged (“rms”). Sound exposure levels (SEL) may also be reported as dB. The SEL is the integration of all the acoustic energy contained within a single sound event. Unless precise measurement types are reported, it can be impossible to directly compare results from two or more independent studies.

### *1.1. Acoustic Capabilities*

Sensory systems, like those that allow for hearing, provide information about an animal’s physical, biological, and social environments, in both air and water. Extensive work has been done to understand the structures, mechanisms, and functions of animal sensory systems in aquatic environments (Atema et al. 1988; Kapoor and Hara 2001; Collin and Marshall 2003). All fish species have hearing and skin-based mechanosensory systems (inner ear and lateral line systems, respectively) that provide information about their surroundings (Fay and Popper 2000). Fay (2009) and some others refer to the ambient sounds to which fishes are exposed as ‘underwater soundscapes’. Anthropogenic sounds can have important negative consequences for fish survival and reproduction if they disrupt an individual’s ability to sense its soundscape, which often tells of predation risk, prey items, or mating opportunities. Potential negative effects include masking of key environmental sounds or social signals, displacement of fish from their habitat, or interference with sensory orientation and navigation.

Fish hearing via the inner ear is typically restricted to low frequencies. As with other vertebrates, fish hearing involves a mechanism whereby the beds of hair cells (Howard et al. 1988; Hudspeth and Markin 1994) located in the inner ear are mechanically affected and cause a neural discharge (Popper and Fay 1999). At least two major pathways for sound transmittance between sound source and the inner ear have been identified for fish. The most primitive pathway involves direct transmission to the inner ear’s otolith, a calcium carbonate mass enveloped by sensory hairs. The inertial difference between the dense otolith and the less-dense inner ear causes the otolith to stimulate the surrounding sensory hair cells. This motion differential is interpreted by the central nervous system as sound.

The second transmission pathway between sound source and the inner ear of fish is via the swim bladder, a gas-filled structure that is much less dense than the rest of the fish’s body. The swim bladder, being more compressible and expandable than either water or fish tissue, will differentially contract and expand relative to the rest of the fish in a sound field. The pulsating swim bladder transmits this mechanical disturbance directly to the inner ear (discussed below). Such a secondary source of sound detection could be more or less effective at stimulating the inner ear, depending on the amplitude and frequency of the pulsation, and the distance and mechanical coupling between the swim bladder and the inner ear (Popper and Fay 1993).

A recent paper by Popper and Fay (2011) discusses the designation of fish based on sound detection capabilities. They suggest that the designations ‘hearing specialist’ and ‘hearing generalist’

no longer be used for fish because of their vague and sometimes contradictory definitions, and that there is instead a range of hearing capabilities across species that is more like a continuum, presumably based on the relative contributions of pressure to the overall hearing capabilities of a species.

According to Popper and Fay (2011), one end of this continuum is represented by fish that only detect particle motion because they lack pressure-sensitive gas bubbles (e.g., swim bladder). These species include elasmobranchs (e.g., sharks) and jawless fish, and some teleosts including flatfish. Fish at this end of the continuum are typically capable of detecting sound frequencies below 1500 Hz.

The other end of the fish hearing continuum is represented by fish with highly specialized otophysical connections between pressure receptive organs, such as the swim bladder, and the inner ear. These fish include some squirrelfish, mormyrids, herrings, and otophysan fish (freshwater fish with Weberian apparatus, an articulated series of small bones that extend from the swim bladder to the inner ear). Rather than being limited to 1.5 kHz or less in hearing, these fish can typically hear up to several kHz. One group of fish in the anadromous herring sub-family Alosinae (shads and menhaden) can detect sounds to well over 180 kHz (Mann et al. 1997, 1998, 2001). This could be the widest hearing range of any vertebrate that has been studied to date. Whereas the specific reason for this very high frequency hearing is not clear, there is strong evidence that this capability evolved for the detection of the ultrasonic sounds produced by echolocating dolphins to enable the fish to detect and avoid predation (Mann et al. 1997; Plachta and Popper 2003).

All other fish have hearing capabilities that fall somewhere between these two extremes of the continuum. Some have unconnected swim bladders located relatively far from the inner ear (e.g., salmonids, tuna), whereas others have unconnected swim bladders located relatively close to the inner ear (e.g., Atlantic cod *Gadus morhua*). There has also been the suggestion that Atlantic cod can detect 38 kHz (Astrup and Møhl 1993). However, the general consensus was that this was not hearing with the ear; probably the fish responding to exceedingly high-pressure signals of the 38-kHz source through some other receptor in the skin, such as touch receptors (Astrup and Møhl 1998).

It is important to recognize that the swim bladder itself is not a sensory end organ, but rather an intermediate part of the sound pathway between sound source and the inner ear of some fish. The inner ear of fish is ultimately the organ that translates the particle displacement component into neural signals for the brain to interpret as sound.

A third mechanosensory pathway found in most bony fish and elasmobranchs (cartilaginous fish) involves the lateral line system. It too relies on sensitivity to water particle motion. The basic sensory unit of the lateral line system is the neuromast, a bundle of sensory and supporting cells whose projecting cilia, similar to those in the ears, are encased in a gelatinous cap. Neuromasts detect distorted sound waves in the immediate vicinity of fish. Generally, fish use the lateral line system to detect the particle displacement component of low frequency acoustic signals (up to 160–200 Hz) over a distance of one to two body lengths. The lateral line is used in conjunction with other sensory systems, including hearing (Sand 1981; Coombs and Montgomery 1999).

There has also been a study of the auditory sensitivity of settlement-stage fish. Using the auditory brainstem response (ABR) technique in the laboratory, Wright et al. (2010) concluded that larvae of coral reef species tested had significantly more sensitive hearing than the larvae of pelagic species tested. All reef fish larvae and the larvae of one of the pelagic species detected frequencies in the 100–2000 Hz range. The larvae of the one other pelagic species did not detect frequencies higher than 800 Hz. The larvae of all coral and pelagic fish species exhibited best hearing at frequencies between 100 and 300 Hz. These results suggested that settlement-stage larval reef fish could be able to detect reef sounds at distances of 100s of metres. Other recent research also indicates that settlement-stage larvae of coral reef fish could use sound as a cue to locate settlement sites (Leis et al. 2003; Tolimieri et al. 2004; Simpson et al. 2005; Leis and Locket 2005).

## 1.2 Potential Effects on Fish

Review papers on the effects of anthropogenic sources of underwater sound on fish have been published (Popper 2009; Popper and Hastings 2009a,b). These papers consider various sources of anthropogenic sound, including seismic airguns. For the purposes of this review, only the effects of seismic airgun sound are considered.

### 1.2.1 Marine Fish

Evidence for airgun-induced damage to fish ears has come from studies using pink snapper *Pagrus auratus* (McCauley et al. 2000a,b, 2003). In these experiments, fish were caged and exposed to the sound of a single moving seismic airgun every 10 s over a period of 1 h and 41 min. The source SPL at 1 m was  $\sim 223$  dB re  $1 \mu\text{Pa} \cdot \text{m}_{\text{p-p}}$ , and the received SPLs were 165–209 dB re  $1 \mu\text{Pa}_{\text{p-p}}$ . The sound energy was highest over the 20–70 Hz frequency range. The pink snapper were exposed to more than 600 airgun discharges during the study. In some individual fish, the sensory epithelium of the inner ear sustained extensive damage as indicated by ablated hair cells. Damage was more extensive in fish examined 58 days post-exposure compared to those examined 18 h post-exposure. There was no evidence of repair or replacement of damaged sensory cells up to 58 days post-exposure. McCauley et al. (2000a,b, 2003) included the following caveats in the study reports: (1) fish were caged and unable to swim away from the seismic source, (2) only one species of fish was examined, (3) the impact on the ultimate survival of the fish is unclear, and (4) airgun exposure specifics required to cause the observed damage were not obtained (i.e., a few high SPL signals or the cumulative effect of many low to moderate SPL signals).

The fish exposed to sound from a single airgun in this study also exhibited startle responses to short range start up and high-level airgun signals (i.e., with received SPLs of 182–195 dB re  $1 \mu\text{Pa}_{\text{rms}}$  (McCauley et al. 2000a,b). Smaller fish were more likely to display a startle response. Responses were observed above received SPLs of 156–161 dB re  $1 \mu\text{Pa}_{\text{rms}}$ . The occurrence of both startle response (classic C-turn response) and alarm responses (e.g., darting movements, flash school expansion, and fast swimming) decreased over time. Other observations included downward distributional shift that was restricted by the 10 m x 6 m x 3 m cages, increase in swimming speed, and the formation of denser aggregations. Fish behaviour appeared to return to pre-exposure state 15–30 min after cessation of seismic firing.

Pearson et al. (1992) investigated the effects of seismic airgun sound on the behaviour of captive rockfish *Sebastes* sp. exposed to the sound of a single stationary airgun at a variety of distances. The airgun used in the study had a source SPL of 223 dB re  $1 \mu\text{Pa} \cdot \text{m}_{0-\text{p}}$ , and measured received SPLs were 137–206 dB re  $1 \mu\text{Pa}_{0-\text{p}}$ . The authors reported that rockfish reacted to the airgun sounds by exhibiting varying degrees of startle and alarm responses, depending on the species of rockfish and the received SPL. Startle responses were observed at a minimum received SPL of 200 dB re  $1 \mu\text{Pa}_{0-\text{p}}$ , and alarm responses occurred at a minimum received SPL of 177 dB re  $1 \mu\text{Pa}_{0-\text{p}}$ . Other observed behavioural changes included the tightening of schools, downward distributional shift, and random movement and orientation. Some fish ascended in the water column and commenced to mill (i.e., “eddy”) at increased speed, whereas others descended to the bottom of the enclosure and remained motionless. Pre-exposure behaviour was reestablished 20–60 min after cessation of seismic airgun discharge. Pearson et al. (1992) concluded that received SPL thresholds for overt rockfish behavioural response and more subtle rockfish behavioural response are 180 dB re  $1 \mu\text{Pa}_{0-\text{p}}$  and 161 dB re  $1 \mu\text{Pa}_{0-\text{p}}$ , respectively.

Using an experimental hook and line fishery approach, Skalski et al. (1992) studied the potential effects of seismic airgun sound on the distribution and catchability of rockfish. The source SPL of the single airgun used in the study was 223 dB re  $1 \mu\text{Pa} \cdot \text{m}_{0-\text{p}}$ , and the received SPLs at the bases of the rockfish aggregations were 186–191 dB re  $1 \mu\text{Pa}_{0-\text{p}}$ . Characteristics of the fish

aggregations were assessed using echosounders. During long-term stationary seismic airgun discharge, there was an overall downward shift in fish distribution. The authors also observed a significant decline in total catch of rockfish during seismic discharge. It should be noted that this experimental approach was different from an actual seismic survey, in that duration of exposure was much longer.

In another study, caged European sea bass *Dicentrarchus labrax* were exposed to multiple discharges from a moving seismic airgun array with a source SPL of  $\sim 256$  dB re  $1 \mu\text{Pa} \cdot \text{m}_{0-p}$  (unspecified measure type) (Santulli et al. 1999). The airguns were discharged every 25 s during a 2-h period. The minimum distance between fish and seismic source was 180 m. The authors did not report any observed pathological injury to the sea bass. Blood was collected from both exposed fish (6-h post-exposure) and control fish (6-h pre-exposure) and subsequently analyzed for cortisol, glucose, and lactate levels. Levels of cortisol, glucose, and lactate were significantly higher in the sera of exposed fish compared to sera of control fish. The elevated levels of all three chemicals returned to pre-exposure levels within 72 h of exposure (Santulli et al. 1999).

Santulli et al. (1999) also used underwater video cameras to monitor fish response to seismic airgun discharge. Resultant video indicated slight startle responses by some of the sea bass when the seismic airgun array discharged as far as 2.5 km from the cage. The proportion of sea bass that exhibited startle response increased as the airgun sound source approached the cage. Once the seismic array was within 180 m of the cage, the sea bass were densely packed at the middle of the enclosure, exhibiting random orientation, and appearing more active than they had been under pre-exposure conditions. Normal behaviour resumed about 2 h after airgun discharge nearest the fish (Santulli et al. 1999).

Boeger et al. (2006) reported observations of coral reef fish in field enclosures before, during, and after exposure to seismic airgun sound. This Brazilian study used an array of eight airguns that was presented to the fish as both a mobile sound source and a static sound source. Minimum distances between the sound source and the fish cage were 0–7 m. Received sound levels were not reported. Neither mortality nor external damage to the fish was observed in any of the experimental scenarios. Most of the airgun array discharges resulted in startle responses, although these behavioural changes lessened with repeated exposures, suggesting habituation.

Chapman and Hawkins (1969) investigated the reactions of free ranging whiting (silver hake) *Merluccius bilinearis* to an intermittently discharging stationary airgun with a source SPL of 220 dB re  $1 \mu\text{Pa} \cdot \text{m}_{0-p}$ . Received SPL was estimated at 178 dB re  $1 \mu\text{Pa}_{0-p}$ . The whiting were monitored with an echosounder. Before any airgun discharge, the fish were located at a depth range of 25–55 m. In apparent response to the airgun sound, the fish descended, forming a compact layer at depths  $>55$  m. After an hour of exposure to the airgun sound, the fish appeared to have habituated as indicated by their return to the pre-exposure depth range, despite the continuing airgun discharge. Airgun discharge ceased for a time and upon its resumption, the fish again descended to greater depths, indicating only temporary habituation.

Hassel et al. (2003, 2004) studied the potential effects of exposure to airgun sound on the behaviour of captive lesser sandeel *Ammodytes marinus*. Depth of the study enclosure used to hold the sandeel was  $\sim 55$  m. The moving airgun array had an estimated source SPL of 256 dB re  $1 \mu\text{Pa} \cdot \text{m}$  (unspecified measure type). Received SPLs were not measured. Exposures were conducted over a 3-day period in a  $10 \text{ km} \times 10 \text{ km}$  area with the cage at its center. The distance between airgun array and fish cage ranged from 55 m when the array was overhead to 7.5 km. No mortality attributable to exposure to the airgun sound was noted. Behaviour of the fish was monitored using underwater video cameras, echosounders, and commercial fishery data collected close to the study area. The approach of the seismic vessel appeared to cause an increase in tail-beat frequency, although the sandeels still appeared to swim calmly. During seismic airgun discharge, many fish exhibited startle responses, followed by flight from the immediate area. The frequency of occurrence of startle response seemed



to increase as the operating seismic array moved closer to the fish. The sandeels stopped exhibiting the startle response once the airgun discharge ceased. They tended to remain higher in the water column during the airgun discharge, and none were observed burying themselves in the soft substrate. The commercial fishery catch data were inconclusive with respect to behavioural effects.

Various species of demersal fish, blue whiting, and some small pelagic fish were exposed to a moving seismic airgun array with a source SPL of  $\sim 250$  dB re  $1 \mu\text{Pa} \cdot \text{m}$  (unspecified measure type) (Dalen and Knutsen 1986). Received SPLs estimated using the assumption of spherical spreading were 200–210 dB re  $1 \mu\text{Pa}$  (unspecified measure type). Seismic sound exposures were conducted every 10 s during a one-week period. The authors used echosounders and sonars to assess the pre- and post-exposure fish distributions. The acoustic mapping results indicated a significant decrease in abundance of demersal fish (36%) after airgun discharge, but comparative trawl catches did not support this. Non-significant reductions in the abundances of blue whiting and small pelagic fish were also indicated by post-exposure acoustic mapping.

La Bella et al. (1996) studied the effects of exposure to seismic airgun sound on fish distribution using echosounder monitoring and changes in catch rate of hake by trawl, and clupeoids by gill netting. The seismic array used had 16 airguns and a source SPL of 256 dB re  $1 \mu\text{Pa} \cdot \text{m}_{0-p}$ . The shot interval was 25 s, and exposure durations were 4.6–12 h. Horizontal distributions did not appear to change as a result of exposure to seismic discharge, but there was some indication of a downward shift in the vertical distribution. The catch rates during experimental fishing did not differ significantly between pre- and post-seismic fishing periods.

Wardle et al. (2001) used video and telemetry to make behavioural observations of marine fish (primarily juvenile saithe, adult pollock, juvenile cod, and adult mackerel) inhabiting an inshore reef off Scotland before, during, and after exposure to discharges of a stationary airgun. The received SPLs were  $\sim 195$ – $218$  dB re  $1 \mu\text{Pa}_{0-p}$ . Pollock did not move away from the reef in response to the seismic airgun sound, and their diurnal rhythm did not appear to be affected. However, there was an indication of a slight effect on the long-term day-to-night movements of the pollock. Video camera observations indicated that fish exhibited startle responses (“C-starts”) to all received levels. There were also indications of behavioural responses to visual stimuli. If the seismic source was visible to the fish, they fled from it. However, if the source was not visible to the fish, they often continued to move toward it.

The potential effects of exposure to seismic sound on fish abundance and distribution were also investigated by Slotte et al. (2004). Twelve days of seismic survey operations spread over a period of one month used a seismic airgun array with a source SPL of 222.6 dB re  $1 \mu\text{Pa} \cdot \text{m}_{p-p}$ . The SPLs received by the fish were not measured. Acoustic surveys of the local distributions of various kinds of pelagic fish, including herring, blue whiting, and mesopelagic species, were conducted during the seismic surveys. There was no strong evidence of short-term horizontal distributional effects. With respect to vertical distribution, blue whiting and mesopelagics were distributed deeper (20–50 m) during the seismic survey compared to pre-exposure. The average densities of fish aggregations were lower within the seismic survey area, and fish abundances appeared to increase in accordance with increasing distance from the seismic survey area.

Fertilized capelin *Mallotus villosus* eggs and monkfish *Lophius americanus* larvae were exposed to seismic airgun sound and subsequently examined and monitored for possible effects of the exposure (Payne et al. 2009). The laboratory exposure studies involved a single airgun. Approximate received SPLs measured in the capelin egg and monkfish larvae exposures were 199–205 dB re  $1 \mu\text{Pa}_{p-p}$  and 205 dB re  $1 \mu\text{Pa}_{p-p}$ , respectively. The capelin eggs were exposed to either 10 or 20 airgun discharges, and the monkfish larvae were exposed to either 10 or 30 discharges. No statistical differences in mortality/ morbidity between control and exposed subjects were found 1–4 days post-exposure in any of the exposure trials for either the capelin eggs or the monkfish larvae.

In uncontrolled experiments, Kostyvchenko (1973) exposed the eggs of numerous fish species (anchovy, red mullet, crucian carp, and blue runner) to various sound sources, including seismic airguns. With the seismic airgun discharge as close as 0.5 m from the eggs, over 75% of them survived the exposure. Egg survival rate increased to over 90% when placed 10 m from the airgun sound source. The range of received SPLs was ~215–233 dB re 1  $\mu\text{Pa}_{0-p}$ .

Eggs, yolk sac larvae, post-yolk sac larvae, post-larvae, and fry of various commercially important fish species (cod, saithe, herring, turbot, and plaice) were exposed to received SPLs ranging from 220 to 242 dB re 1  $\mu\text{Pa}$  (unspecified measure type) (Booman et al. 1996). These received levels corresponded to exposure distances of 0.75–6 m. The authors reported some cases of injury and mortality but most of these occurred as a result of exposures at very close range (i.e., <15 m). The rigor of anatomical and pathological assessments was questionable.

Saetre and Ona (1996) applied a “worst-case scenario” mathematical model to investigate the effects of seismic sound on fish eggs and larvae. They concluded that mortality rates caused by exposure to seismic airgun sound are so low compared to the natural mortality that the impact of seismic surveying on recruitment to a fish stock must be regarded as insignificant.

### **1.2.2 Freshwater Fish**

Popper et al. (2005) tested the hearing sensitivity of three Mackenzie River fish species after exposure to five discharges from a seismic airgun. The mean received peak SPL was 205–209 dB re 1  $\mu\text{Pa}$  per discharge, and the approximate mean received SEL was 176–180 dB re 1  $\mu\text{Pa}^2 \cdot \text{s}$  per discharge. Whereas the broad whitefish showed no Temporary Threshold Shift (TTS) as a result of the exposure, adult northern pike and lake chub exhibited TTSs of 10–15 dB, followed by complete recovery within 24 h of exposure. The same animals were also examined to determine whether there were observable effects on the sensory cells of the inner ear as a result of exposure to seismic sound (Song et al. 2008). No damage to the ears of the fish was found, including those that exhibited TTS.

In another part of the same Mackenzie River project, Jorgenson and Gyselman (2009) investigated the behavioural responses of arctic riverine fish to seismic airgun sound. They used hydroacoustic survey techniques to determine whether fish behaviour upon exposure to airgun sound can either mitigate or enhance the potential impact of the sound. The study indicated that fish behavioural characteristics were generally unchanged by the exposure to airgun sound. The tracked fish did not exhibit herding behaviour in front of the mobile airgun array and, therefore, were not exposed to sustained high sound levels.

### **1.2.3 Anadromous Fish**

In uncontrolled experiments using a very small sample of different groups of young salmonids, including Arctic cisco, fish were caged and exposed to various types of sound. One sound type was either a single shot or a series of four shots 10–15 s apart of a 300-in<sup>3</sup> seismic airgun at 2000–2200 psi (Falk and Lawrence 1973). Swim bladder damage was reported but no mortality was observed when fish were exposed within 1–2 m of an airgun source with source level, as estimated by Turnpenny and Nedwell (1994), of ~230 dB re 1  $\mu\text{Pa} \cdot \text{m}$  (unspecified measure).

Thomsen (2002) exposed rainbow trout and Atlantic salmon held in aquaculture enclosures to the sounds from a small airgun array. Received SPLs were 142–186 dB re 1  $\mu\text{Pa}_{p-p}$ . The fish were exposed to 124 pulses over a 3-day period. In addition to monitoring fish behaviour with underwater video cameras, the authors also analyzed cod and haddock catch data from a longline fishing vessel operating in the immediate area. Only 8 of the 124 shots appeared to evoke behavioural reactions by the salmonids, but overall impacts were minimal. No fish mortality was observed during or immediately after exposure. The author reported no significant effects on cod and haddock catch rates, and the behavioural effects were hard to differentiate from normal behaviour.

Weinhold and Weaver (1972, cited in Turnpenny et al. 1994) exposed caged coho salmon smolts to impulses from 330- and 660-in<sup>3</sup> airguns at distances ranging from 1 to 10 m, resulting in received levels estimated at ~214–216 dB (units not given). No lethal effects were observed.

It should be noted that, in a recent and comprehensive review, Hastings and Popper (2005) take issue with many of the authors cited above for problems with experimental design and execution, measurements, and interpretation. Hastings and Popper (2005) dealt primarily with possible effects of pile-driving sounds (which, like airgun sounds, are impulsive and repetitive). However, the review provided an excellent and critical review of the impacts to fish from other underwater anthropogenic sounds.

### ***1.3 Indirect Effects on Fisheries***

The most comprehensive experimentation on the effects of seismic airgun sound on catchability of fish was conducted in the Barents Sea by Engås et al. (1993, 1996). They investigated the effects of seismic airgun sound on distributions, abundances, and catch rates of cod and haddock using acoustic mapping and experimental fishing with trawls and longlines. The maximum source SPL was ~248 dB re 1  $\mu\text{Pa} \cdot \text{m}_{0-p}$  based on back-calculations from measurements collected via a hydrophone at depth 80 m. No measurements of the received SPLs were made. Davis et al. (1998) estimated the received SPL at the sea bottom immediately below the array and at 18 km from the array at 205 dB re 1  $\mu\text{Pa}_{0-p}$  and 178 dB re 1  $\mu\text{Pa}_{0-p}$ , respectively. Engås et al. (1993, 1996) concluded that there were indications of distributional change during and immediately following the seismic airgun discharge (45–64% decrease in acoustic density according to sonar data). The lowest densities were observed within 9.3 km of the seismic discharge area. The authors indicated that trawl catches of both cod and haddock declined after the seismic operations. Whereas longline catches of haddock also showed decline after seismic airgun discharge, those for cod increased.

Løkkeborg (1991), Løkkeborg and Soldal (1993), and Dalen and Knutsen (1986) also examined the effects of seismic airgun sound on demersal fish catches. Løkkeborg (1991) examined the effects on cod catches. The source SPL of the airgun array used in his study was 239 dB re 1  $\mu\text{Pa} \cdot \text{m}$  (unspecified measure type), but received SPLs were not measured. Approximately 43 h of seismic airgun discharge occurred during an 11-day period, with a 5-sec interval between pulses. Catch rate decreases ranging of 55–80% within the seismic survey area were observed. This apparent effect persisted for at least 24 h within about 10 km of the survey area.

Løkkeborg et al. (2010) described a 2009 study of the effect of seismic sound on commercial fish. Both gillnet and longline vessels fished for Greenland halibut, redfish, saithe, and haddock for 12 days before the onset of seismic surveying, 38 days during seismic surveying, and 25 days after cessation of seismic surveying. Acoustic surveying was also conducted during these times. Gillnet catches of Greenland halibut and redfish during seismic operations were higher than they had been before the onset of the survey and remained higher after cessation of the survey. Longline catches of Greenland halibut decreased during seismic operations but increased again after the seismic surveying was completed. Gillnet catches of saithe decreased during seismic operations and remained low during the 25-day period following the survey. Longline catches of haddock before and during seismic operations were not significantly different, although catches did decline as the seismic vessel approached the fishing area. The haddock fishery was conducted in an area with lower ensonification compared to the fishery areas of the other three species. Acoustic surveys showed that the saithe had partly left the area, perhaps in response to the seismic operations, whereas distributional changes were not observed in the other three species. Løkkeborg et al. (2010) suggested that an increase in swimming activity as a result of exposure to seismic sound could explain why gillnet catches increased and longline catches decreased.

Turnpenny et al. (1994) examined results of these studies as well as the results of other studies on rockfish. They used rough estimations of received SPLs at catch locations and concluded that

catchability is reduced when received SPLs exceed 160–180 dB re 1  $\mu\text{Pa}_{0-p}$ . They also concluded that reaction thresholds of fish lacking a swim bladder (e.g., flatfish) would likely be about 20 dB higher. Given the considerable variability in sound transmission loss between different geographic locations, the SPLs that were assumed in these studies were likely quite inaccurate.

Turnpenny and Nedwell (1994) also reported on the effects of seismic airgun discharge on inshore bass fisheries in shallow U.K. waters (5–30 m deep). The airgun array used had a source level of 250 dB re 1  $\mu\text{Pa} \cdot \text{m}_{0-p}$ . Received levels in the fishing areas were estimated at 163–191 dB re 1  $\mu\text{Pa}_{0-p}$ . Using fish tagging and catch record methodologies, they concluded that there was no distinguishable migration from the ensonified area, nor was there any reduction in bass catches on days when seismic airguns were discharged.

Skalski et al. (1992) used a 100-in<sup>3</sup> airgun with a source level of 223 dB re 1  $\mu\text{Pa} \cdot \text{m}_{0-p}$  to examine the potential effects of airgun sound on the catchability of rockfish. The moving airgun was discharged along transects in the study fishing area, after which a fishing vessel deployed a set line, ran three echosounder transects, and then deployed two more set lines. Each fishing experiment lasted 1 h 25 min. Received SPLs at the base of the rockfish aggregations were 186–191 dB re 1  $\mu\text{Pa}_{0-p}$ . The catch-per-unit-effort (CPUE) for rockfish declined on average by 52.4% when the airguns were operating. Skalski et al. (1992) believed that the reduction in catch resulted from a change in behaviour of the fish. The fish schools descended towards the bottom and their swimming behaviour changed during airgun discharge. Although fish dispersal was not observed, the authors hypothesized that it could have occurred at a different location with a different bottom type. Skalski et al. (1992) did not continue fishing after cessation of airgun discharge. They speculated that CPUE would quickly return to normal in the experimental area, because fish behaviour appeared to normalize within minutes of cessation of airgun discharge. However, in an area where exposure to airgun sound could have caused the fish to disperse, the authors suggested that a lower CPUE could persist for a longer period.

European sea bass were exposed to sound from seismic airgun arrays with a source SPL of 262 dB re 1  $\mu\text{Pa} \cdot \text{m}_{0-p}$  (Pickett et al. 1994). The seismic survey was conducted over a period of 4–5 months. The study was intended to investigate the effects of seismic airgun discharge on inshore bass fisheries. Information was collected through a tag and release program, and from the logbooks of commercial fishermen. Most of the 152 recovered fish from the tagging program were caught within 10 km of the release site, and it was suggested that most of these bass did not leave the area for a prolonged period. No significant changes in commercial catch rate were observed (Pickett et al. 1994).

## 2. Marine Invertebrates

This review provides a detailed summary of the limited data and literature available on the observed effects (or lack of effects) of exposure to airgun sound on marine invertebrates. Specific conditions and results of the studies, including sound exposure levels and sound thresholds of responses, are discussed when available.

Sound caused by underwater seismic survey equipment results in energy pulses with very high peak pressures (Richardson et al. 1995). This was especially true when chemical explosives were used for underwater surveys. Virtually all underwater seismic surveying conducted today uses airguns, which typically have lower peak pressures and longer rise times than chemical explosives. However, sound levels from underwater airgun discharges could still be high enough to potentially injure or kill animals located close to the source. Also, there is a potential for disturbance to normal behavior upon exposure to airgun sound. The following sections provide an overview of sound production and detection in marine invertebrates, and information on the effects of exposure to sound on marine invertebrates, with emphasis

on seismic survey sound. Fisheries and Oceans Canada has published two internal documents that provide a literature review of the effects of seismic and other underwater sound on invertebrates (Moriyasu et al. 2004; Payne et al. 2008). The available information as reviewed in those documents and here includes results of studies of varying degrees of scientific rigor as well as anecdotal information.

## **2.1 Acoustic Capabilities**

Much of the available information on acoustic abilities of marine invertebrates pertains to crustaceans, specifically lobsters, crabs, and shrimps. Other acoustic-related studies have been conducted on cephalopods.

### **2.1.1 Sound Production**

Many invertebrates are capable of producing sound, including barnacles, amphipods, shrimp, crabs, and lobsters (Au and Banks 1998; Tolstoganova 2002). Invertebrates typically produce sound by scraping or rubbing various parts of their bodies, although they also produce sound in other ways. Sounds made by marine invertebrates can be associated with territorial behaviour, mating, courtship, and aggression. On the other hand, some of these sounds could be incidental and not have any biological relevance. Sounds known to be produced by marine invertebrates have frequencies ranging from 87 Hz to 200 kHz, depending on the species.

Both male and female American lobsters *Homarus americanus* produce a buzzing vibration with their carapace when grasped (Pye and Watson III 2004; Henninger and Watson III 2005). Larger lobsters vibrate more consistently than smaller lobsters, suggesting that sound production could be involved with mating behaviour. Sound production by other species of lobsters has also been studied (Buscaino et al. 2011). Among deep-sea lobsters, sound level was more variable at night than during the day, with the highest levels occurring at the lowest frequencies.

While feeding, king crabs *Paralithodes camtschaticus* produce impulsive sounds that appear to stimulate movement by other crabs, including approach behaviour (Tolstoganova 2002). King crabs also appeared to produce ‘discomfort’ sounds when environmental conditions were manipulated. These discomfort sounds differ from the feeding sounds in terms of frequency range and pulse duration.

Snapping shrimp *Synalpheus parneomeris* are among the major sources of biological sound in temperate and tropical shallow-water areas (Au and Banks 1998). By rapidly closing one of its frontal chelae (claws), a snapping shrimp generates a forward jet of water, and the cavitation of fast moving water produces a sound. Both the sound and the jet of water could function in feeding and territorial behaviours of alpheididae shrimp. Measured source sound pressure levels (SPLs) for snapping ship were 183–189 dB re 1  $\mu\text{Pa}\cdot\text{m}_{\text{p-p}}$  and extended over a frequency range of 2–200 kHz.

### **2.1.2 Sound Detection**

There is considerable debate about the hearing capabilities of aquatic invertebrates. Whether they are able to hear or not depends on how underwater sound and underwater hearing are defined. In contrast to fish and aquatic mammals, no physical structures have been discovered in aquatic invertebrates that are stimulated by the pressure component of sound. However, vibrations (i.e., mechanical disturbances of the water) are also characteristic of sound waves. Rather than being pressure-sensitive, aquatic invertebrates appear to be most sensitive to the vibrational component of sound (Breithaupt 2002). Statocyst organs could provide one means of vibration detection for aquatic invertebrates.

More is known about the acoustic detection capabilities in decapod crustaceans than in any other marine invertebrate group although cephalopod acoustic capabilities are now becoming a focus of study. Crustaceans appear to be most sensitive to sounds of low frequencies, i.e., <1000 Hz

(Budelmann 1992; Popper et al. 2001). A study by Lovell et al. (2005) suggested greater sensitivity of the prawn *Palaemon serratus* to low-frequency sound than previously thought. Lovell et al. (2006) showed that *P. serratus* is capable of detecting a 500-Hz tone regardless of its body size and the related number and size of statocyst hair cells. Studies involving American lobsters suggested that these crustaceans are more sensitive to higher frequency sounds than previously realized (Pye and Watson III 2004).

It is possible that statocyst hair cells of cephalopods are directionally sensitive in a way that is similar to the responses of hair cells of the vertebrate vestibular and lateral line systems (Budelmann and Williamson 1994; Budelmann 1996). Kaifu et al. (2008) provided evidence that the cephalopod *Octopus ocellatus* detects particle motion with its statocyst. Studies by Packard et al. (1990), Rawizza (1995), Komak et al. (2005), and Mooney et al. (2010) have tested the sensitivities of various cephalopods to water-borne vibrations, some of which were generated by low-frequency sound. Using the auditory brainstem response (ABR) approach, Hu et al. (2009) showed that auditory evoked potentials can be obtained in the frequency ranges 400–1500 Hz for the squid *Sepiotheutis lessoniana* and 400–1000 Hz for the octopus *Octopus vulgaris*, higher than frequencies previously observed to be detectable by cephalopods.

Vermeij et al. (2010) studied the movement of coral larvae in the laboratory, and concluded that the larvae are able to detect and respond to underwater sound. This is the first description of an auditory response in the invertebrate phylum Cnidaria. The authors speculated that coral larvae could use reef noise as a cue for orientation.

In summary, only a few studies have been conducted on the sensitivity of certain invertebrate species to underwater sound. Available data suggest that they are capable of detecting vibrations but they do not appear to be capable of detecting pressure fluctuations.

## **2.2 Potential Effects**

In marine invertebrates, potential effects of exposure to sound can be categorized as pathological, physiological, and behavioural. Pathological effects include lethal and sub-lethal injury to the animals, physiological effects include temporary primary and secondary stress responses, and behavioural effects refer to changes in exhibited behaviours (i.e., disturbance). The three categories should not be considered as independent of one another and are likely interrelated in complex ways.

### **2.2.1 Pathological Effects**

In water, acute injury or death of organisms as a result of exposure to sound appears to depend on two features of the sound source: (1) received peak pressure, and (2) time required for the pressure to rise and decay. Generally, the higher the received pressure and the less time it takes for the pressure to rise and decay, the greater the chance of acute pathological effects. Considering the peak pressure and rise/decay time characteristics of seismic airgun arrays used today, the associated pathological zone for invertebrates would be expected to be small, i.e., within a few meters of the seismic source. Few studies have assessed the potential for pathological effects on invertebrates from exposure to seismic sound.

The pathological impacts of seismic survey sound on marine invertebrates were investigated in a pilot study on snow crabs *Chionoecetes opilio* (Christian et al. 2003, 2004). Under controlled field experimental conditions, captive adult male snow crabs, egg-carrying female snow crabs, and fertilized snow crab eggs were exposed to variable SPLs (191–221 dB re 1  $\mu\text{Pa}_{0-p}$ ) and sound energy levels (SELs) (<130–187 dB re 1  $\mu\text{Pa}^2\cdot\text{s}$ ). Neither acute nor chronic (12 weeks post-exposure) mortality was observed for the adult crabs. There was a significant difference in development rate noted between the exposed and unexposed fertilized eggs/embryos. The egg mass exposed to seismic energy had a higher proportion of less-developed eggs than the unexposed mass. It should be noted

that both egg masses came from a single female, so individual variability was not measured (Christian et al. 2003, 2004).

In 2003, a collaborative study was conducted in the southern Gulf of St. Lawrence, Canada, to investigate the effects of exposure to sound from a commercial seismic survey on egg-bearing female snow crabs (DFO 2004). This study had design problems that impacted interpretation of some of the results (Chadwick 2004). Caged animals were placed on the ocean bottom at a location within the survey area and at a location outside of the survey area. The maximum received SPL was  $\sim 195$  dB re  $1 \mu\text{Pa}_{0-p}$ . The crabs were exposed for 132 hr of the survey, equivalent to thousands of seismic shots of varying received SPLs. The animals were retrieved and transferred to laboratories for analyses. Neither acute nor chronic lethal or sub-lethal injury was found in the female crabs or crab embryos. DFO (2004) reported that some exposed individuals had short-term soiling of gills, antennules, and statocysts, bruising of the hepatopancreas and ovary, and detached outer membranes of oocytes. However, these differences could not be conclusively linked to exposure to seismic survey sound. Boudreau et al. (2009) presented the proceedings of a workshop held to evaluate the results of additional studies conducted to answer some questions arising from the original study discussed in DFO (2004). Proceedings of the workshop did not include any more definitive conclusions regarding the original results.

Payne et al. (2007) conducted a pilot study of the effects of exposure to seismic sound on various health endpoints of the American lobster. Adult lobsters were exposed either 20–200 times to 202 dB re  $1 \mu\text{Pa}_{p-p}$  or 50 times to 227 dB re  $1 \mu\text{Pa}_{p-p}$ , and then monitored for changes to survival, food consumption, turnover rate, serum protein level, serum enzyme levels, and serum calcium level. Observations were made over a period of a few days to several months. Results indicated no effects on delayed mortality or damage to the mechanosensory systems associated with animal equilibrium and posture (as assessed by turnover rate).

In a field study, Pearson et al. (1994) exposed Stage II larvae of the Dungeness crab *Cancer magister* to single discharges from a seven-airgun array and compared their mortality and development rates with those of unexposed larvae. No statistically significant differences were found in immediate survival, long-term survival, or time to molt between the exposed and unexposed larvae, even those exposed within 1 m of the seismic source.

In 2001 and 2003, there were two incidents of multiple strandings of the giant squid on the north coast of Spain, and there was speculation that they were caused by exposure to geophysical seismic survey sounds occurring at about the same time in the Bay of Biscay (Guerra et al. 2004). A total of nine giant squid, either stranded or moribund surface-floating, were collected at these times. However, Guerra et al. (2004) did not present any evidence that conclusively links the giant squid strandings and floaters to seismic activity in the area. Based on necropsies of seven (six females and one male) specimens, there was evidence of acute tissue damage. The authors speculated that one female with extensive tissue damage was affected by the impact of acoustic waves. However, little is known about the impact of strong airgun signals on cephalopods, and the authors did not describe the seismic sources, locations, or durations of the Bay of Biscay surveys. In addition, there were no controls, the observations were circumstantial, and the examined animals had been dead long enough for commencement of tissue degradation.

McCauley et al. (2000a,b) exposed caged cephalopods to noise from a single 20-in<sup>3</sup> airgun with maximum SPLs of  $>200$  dB re  $1 \mu\text{Pa}_{0-p}$ . Statocysts were removed and preserved, but at the time of publication, results of the statocyst analyses were not available. No squid or cuttlefish mortalities were reported as a result of these exposures.

André et al. (2011) exposed cephalopods, primarily cuttlefish, to continuous 50–400 Hz sinusoidal wave sweeps for two hours while captive in relatively small tanks, and reported morphological and ultrastructural evidence of massive acoustic trauma (i.e., permanent and

substantial alterations of statocyst sensory hair cells). The received SPL was reported as  $157 \pm 5$  dB re  $1 \mu\text{Pa}$ , with peak levels at 175 dB re  $1 \mu\text{Pa}$ . As in the McCauley et al. (2003) paper on sensory hair cell damage in pink snapper as a result of exposure to seismic sound, the cephalopods were subjected to higher sound levels than they would be under natural conditions, and they were unable to swim away from the sound source.

### 2.2.2 Physiological Effects

Biochemical responses by marine invertebrates to acoustic stress have also been studied to a limited degree. Such studies of stress responses could possibly provide some indication of the physiological consequences of acoustic exposure and perhaps any subsequent chronic detrimental effects. Stress could potentially affect animal populations by reducing reproductive capacity and adult abundance.

Stress indicators in the haemolymph of adult male snow crabs were monitored immediately after exposure of the animals to seismic survey sound (Christian et al. 2003, 2004) and at various intervals after exposure. No significant acute or chronic differences between exposed and unexposed animals in terms of the stress indicators (e.g., proteins, enzymes, cell type count) were observed.

Payne et al. (2007), in their study of the effects of exposure of adult American lobsters to airgun sound, noted decreases in the levels of serum protein, particular serum enzymes, and serum calcium in the haemolymph of animals exposed to the sound pulses. Statistically significant differences ( $P=0.05$ ) were noted in serum protein at 12 days post-exposure, serum enzymes at 5 days post-exposure, and serum calcium at 12 days post-exposure. During the histological analysis conducted 4 months post-exposure, Payne et al. (2007) noted more deposits of PAS-stained material, likely glycogen, in the hepatopancreas of some of the exposed lobsters. Accumulation of glycogen could be attributable to stress or disturbance of cellular processes.

Price (2007) found that blue mussels *Mytilus edulis* responded to a 10-kHz pure tone continuous signal by decreasing respiration. Smaller mussels did not appear to react until exposed for 30 min, whereas larger mussels responded after 10 min of exposure. The larger mussels tended to lower the oxygen uptake rate more than the smaller animals. The oxygen uptake rate tended to be reduced to a greater degree in the larger mussels than in the smaller animals.

### 2.2.3 Behavioural Effects

Some studies have focused on the potential behavioural effects on marine invertebrates.

Christian et al. (2003) investigated the behavioural effects of exposure to airgun sound on snow crabs. Eight animals were equipped with ultrasonic tags, released, and monitored for multiple days before exposure and after exposure. Received SPL and SEL were  $\sim 191$  dB re  $1 \mu\text{Pa}_{0-p}$  and  $< 130$  dB re  $1 \mu\text{Pa}^2\text{-s}$ , respectively. The crabs were exposed to 200 discharges over a 33-min period. None of the tagged animals left the immediate area after exposure to the airgun sound. Five animals were captured in the snow crab commercial fishery the following year, one at the release location, one 35 km from the release location, and three at intermediate distances from the release location.

Another study approach used by Christian et al. (2003) involved monitoring snow crabs with a remote video camera during their exposure to airgun sound. The caged animals were placed on the ocean bottom at a depth of 50 m. Received SPL and SEL were  $\sim 202$  dB re  $1 \mu\text{Pa}_{0-p}$  and 150 dB re  $1 \mu\text{Pa}^2\text{-s}$ , respectively. The crabs were exposed to 200 discharges over a 33-min period. They did not exhibit any overt startle response during the exposure period.

Christian et al. (2003) also investigated the pre- and post-exposure catchability of snow crabs during a commercial fishery. Received SPLs and SELs were not measured directly and likely ranged widely considering the area fished. Maximum SPL and SEL were likely similar to those measured during the telemetry study. There were seven pre-exposure and six post-exposure trap sets. Unfortunately, there was considerable variability in set duration because of poor weather. Results



indicated that the catch-per-unit-effort did not decrease after the crabs were exposed to seismic survey sound.

Parry and Gason (2006) statistically analyzed data related to rock lobster *Jasus edwardsii* commercial catches and seismic surveying in Australian waters between 1978 and 2004. They did not find any evidence that lobster catch rates were affected by seismic surveys.

Caged female snow crabs exposed to sound associated with a commercial seismic survey conducted in the southern Gulf of St. Lawrence, Canada, exhibited a higher rate of ‘righting’ than those crabs not exposed to seismic survey sound (J. Payne, Research Scientist, DFO, St. John’s, Newfoundland, pers. comm.). ‘Righting’ refers to a crab’s ability to return itself to an upright position after being placed on its back. Christian et al. (2003) made the same observation in their study.

Payne et al. (2007), in their study of the effects of exposure to seismic sound on adult American lobsters, noted a trend of increased food consumption by the animals exposed to seismic sound.

Andriguetto-Filho et al. (2005) attempted to evaluate the impact of seismic survey sound on artisanal shrimp fisheries off Brazil. Bottom trawl yields were measured before and after multiple-day shooting of an airgun array with a source SPL of 196 dB re 1  $\mu\text{Pa}\cdot\text{m}$ . Water depth in the experimental area was 2–15 m. Results of the study did not indicate any significant deleterious impact on shrimp catches. Anecdotal information from Newfoundland, Canada, indicated that catch rates of snow crabs showed a significant reduction immediately following a pass by a seismic survey vessel (G. Chidley, Newfoundland fisherman, pers. comm.). Additional anecdotal information from Newfoundland, Canada, indicated that a school of shrimp observed on a fishing vessel sonar shifted downwards and away from a nearby seismic airgun sound source (H. Thorne, Newfoundland fisherman, pers. comm.). This observed effect was temporary.

Caged brown shrimp *Crangon crangon* reared under different acoustical conditions exhibited differences in aggressive behaviour and feeding rate (Lagardère 1982). Those exposed to a continuous sound source showed more aggression and less feeding behaviour. It should be noted that behavioural response by caged animals could differ from behavioural responses of animals in the wild.

McCauley et al. (2000a,b) provided the first evidence of the behavioural response of southern calamari squid *Sepioteuthis australis* exposed to seismic airgun sound. McCauley et al. reported on the exposure of caged cephalopods (50 squid and two cuttlefish) to noise from a single 20-in<sup>3</sup> airgun. The cephalopods were exposed to both stationary and mobile sound sources. The two-run total exposure times of the three trials ranged from 69 to 119 min. at a firing rate of once every 10–15 s. The maximum SPL was >200 dB re 1  $\mu\text{Pa}_{0-p}$ . Some of the squid fired their ink sacs apparently in response to the first shot of one of the trials and then moved quickly away from the airgun. In addition, some squid also moved towards the water surface as the airgun approached. McCauley et al. (2000a,b) reported that the startle and avoidance responses occurred at a received SPL of 174 dB re 1  $\mu\text{Pa}_{\text{rms}}$ . They also exposed squid to a ramped approach-depart airgun signal whereby the received SPL was gradually increased over time. No strong startle response (i.e., ink discharge) was observed, but alarm responses, including increased swimming speed and movement to the surface, were observed once the received SPL reached a level in the 156–161 dB re 1  $\mu\text{Pa}_{\text{rms}}$  range.

Komak et al. (2005) also reported the results of a study of cephalopod behavioural responses to local water movements. In this case, juvenile cuttlefish *Sepia officinalis* exhibited various behavioural responses to local sinusoidal water movements of different frequencies between 0.01 and 1000 Hz. These responses included body pattern changing, movement, burrowing, reorientation, and swimming. The behavioural responses of the octopus *Octopus ocellatus* to non-impulse sound have been investigated by Kaifu et al. (2007). The sound stimuli, reported as having levels 120 dB re 1  $\mu\text{Pa}_{\text{rms}}$ , were at various frequencies; 50, 100, 150, 200, and 1000 Hz. The respiratory activity of the

octopus changed when exposed to sound in the 50–150 Hz range but not for sound at 200–1000 Hz. Respiratory suppression by the octopus could have represented a means of escaping detection by a predator.

Low-frequency sound (<200 Hz) has also been used as a means of preventing settling/fouling by aquatic invertebrates such as zebra mussels *Dreissena polymorpha* (Donskoy and Ludyanskiy 1995) and balanoid barnacles *Balanus* sp. (Branscomb and Rittschof 1984). Price (2007) observed that blue mussels *Mytilus edulis* closed their valves upon exposure to 10-kHz pure tone continuous sound.

Although not demonstrated in the invertebrate literature, masking can be considered a potential effect of anthropogenic underwater sound on marine invertebrates. Some invertebrates are known to produce sounds (Au and Banks 1998; Tolstoganova 2002; Latha et al. 2005). The functionality and biological relevance of these sounds are not understood (Jeffs et al. 2003, 2005; Lovell et al. 2005; Radford et al. 2007). If some of the sounds are of biological significance to some invertebrates, then masking of those sounds or of sounds produced by predators, at least the particle displacement component, could potentially have adverse effects on marine invertebrates. However, even if masking does occur in some invertebrates, the intermittent nature of airgun sound is expected to result in less masking effect than would occur with continuous sound.

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