

<i>NOAA Fisheries West Coast Region</i>	<i>U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Regions 1 & 8</i>	<i>California/ Washington/ Oregon Departments of Transportation</i>	<i>California Department of Fish and Wildlife</i>	<i>U.S. Federal Highway Administration</i>
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August 28, 2013

From: Fisheries Hydroacoustic Working Group

Subject: Concurrence and General Instructions on Use of the Underwater Noise Monitoring Plan Template

To: Monitoring Plan Template Users

Representatives of the agencies listed at the top of this cover letter (Fisheries Hydroacoustic Working Group (FHWG)) have developed the Underwater Noise Monitoring Template (attached) for use when monitoring is conducted of the underwater sounds generated by pile driving. The goal is to standardize collecting and reporting monitoring data of underwater noise. The FHWG steering committee agreed and concurred on the use of the monitoring template at the July 25, 2013 meeting, with key technical and policy staff present from the Federal Highway Administration, NOAA Fisheries, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the Departments of Transportation from California, Oregon, and Washington.

The template is designed as a general monitoring report outline and provides guidance for monitoring and reporting underwater sound levels generated during impact pile driving. It was developed as a tool to help the transportation agencies meet their obligations under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). However, the monitoring needs may vary among regions or states if they have different ESA-listed species and it may be necessary to modify the monitoring plan accordingly. For instance, the sections on marine mammals or marbled murrelets would not be necessary for projects in inland waters. The template also contains some items that are recommended or optional and others that are required (e.g., using terms such as will or shall). For example, airborne noise monitoring is not required for fishes but may be for marine mammals or marbled murrelets. Monitoring of vibratory pile driving activities is not usually required but may be under certain circumstances, such as to determine the extent of marine mammal monitoring during construction or during times of the year when juvenile ESA-listed salmon are present. Measurements of background sound levels are not required but may be helpful in estimating the distance at which vibratory pile driving sound can affect the behavior of marine mammals. The user is encouraged to contact the appropriate agency staff (see table below) early in the process to answer questions about the template and to discuss project-specific information that can be used to ensure that their monitoring plan meets the needs of the relevant agencies.

Although this template was developed specifically to help transportation agencies meet their obligations under the ESA, the FHWG supports its use by other agencies and for other purposes, such as meeting the essential fish habitat provisions of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act or monitoring the effects on other aquatic species of concern. Doing so will promote consistency in conducting hydroacoustic monitoring and the reporting of the results, which will benefit a wider group.

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