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News Release

International Association of
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September 27, 2013

Independent Scientific Review Panel Says Seismic Airguns Not the Cause of Strandings

Houston, TX – An independent scientific review panel in a report recently released found that seismic airguns were not the cause of stranding more than 100 melon-headed whales off the coast of Madagascar in 2008.

Chip Gill, President of the International Association of Geophysical Contractors (IAGC) said, “Contrary to what Oceana and others have said, the report does not make any direct or indirect connection between seismic surveys and death of marine animals. It actually excludes seismic as the cause.”

IAGC is the international trade association representing all segments of the geophysical industry, with more than 150 member companies. IAGC’s focus areas include government issues, standards, and best practices, with an emphasis on health, safety and environmental issues as well as the commercial health of the geophysical industry.

A recent campaign by Oceana to stop seismic surveys in the Atlantic Ocean claims “seismic blasts” caused the whales to become stranded and die. The final report of the Independent Scientific Review Panel (ISRP), the body investigating the incident, has ruled out seismic as a potential cause of the animals leaving their typical habitat. It has concluded that the seismic airguns that were initially thought to have played some role, “...in the view of the ISRP clearly did not.”

The ISRP report further supports an earlier finding by NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service in a May 11, 2012 Federal Register notice that states, “to date, there is no evidence that serious injury, death or stranding by marine mammals can occur from exposure to airgun pulses, even in the case of large airgun arrays.”

“The geophysical industry takes a great deal of care and consideration of potential impacts to the marine environment. We implement mitigation measures to further reduce any potential impacts to marine mammals,” Gill said. “The industry has demonstrated its ability to operate seismic exploration activities in a manner that protects marine life. Any undertakings in the Atlantic would be done with the same care and consideration for marine life.”

The Atlantic OCS is estimated to hold at least 3.3 billion barrels of oil and 31.3 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. Seismic surveys are necessary in the Atlantic to update these estimates as the last surveys were conducted 30 years ago. Atlantic OCS resource development is projected to support over 160,000 jobs 15 years after initial lease sales, fluctuating between 140,000 and 160,000 jobs thereafter.

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About IAGC

IAGC is the international trade association representing the industry that provides geophysical services (geophysical data acquisition, seismic data ownership and licensing, geophysical data processing and interpretation, and associated service and product providers) to the oil and gas industry.

More information on IAGC and the geophysical industry can be found at <http://www.iagc.org> and <http://geophysicsrocks.com>

For reference material on Marine Mammal Protection, see <http://www.iagc.org/MarineEnvironment/GovernmentInformation/>.

For a video overview of marine seismic operations, see <http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLEE2ECC235BCA5FA0>

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