

Photo: Marc Page



Fishing boats in Tadoussac



**Saguenay-St. Lawrence**  
MARINE PARK



Fin Whales blows  
Photo: Daniel Rossel, Parks Canada



The Saguenay-St. Lawrence Marine Park is a marine conservation area where the main challenge is preserving ecosystems while promoting ways of using them in an ecologically sustainable manner. This means that the ecosystems can be used, but their limits for supplying services and resources must be taken into account and the park's biological diversity must be safeguarded. The marine park is responsible for managing certain activities that take place within its boundaries. It is supported by other agencies and departments that each have their own responsibilities. It is through its influential role that the marine park has promoted a very strong degree of cooperation with all groups involved.

Of all the activities that take place in the marine park, marine tours, and particularly whale watching and viewing the surrounding landscapes, are the most popular. Commercial and pleasure boating, sea kayaking, scuba diving, hiking, whale watching from land sites, fishing and hunting are other activities that take place in the park.

### Vessel traffic

Vessel traffic leads to a number of environmental impacts, including petroleum hydrocarbon contamination, ocean noise, potential disruption of animal life and collisions with marine mammals. While the impact of boat traffic on whales has not been clearly demonstrated, crowds of boats around a whale or group of whales is one potential source of stress.



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## Fishing and hunting

Several harvesting activities are practiced in the marine park, including commercial fishing, ice fishing, and recreational fishing of fish and shellfish in the summer season. Hunting of seals and migratory birds is also practiced.

## The most pressing issues

### 1. Commercial fishing

The fact that commercial fishing is practiced in the estuary is of concern; based on present information, we are unable to monitor the amount of harvesting that occurs within the boundaries of the marine park. Implementation of specific marine park management measures will ensure the future of both the resources and fishing and at the same time guarantee the park's biological diversity. The marine park supports the continued closure of the Saguenay Fjord to commercial harvesting.

### 2. Recreational fishing

Recreational fishing practices are also cause for concern, since harvesting levels do not necessarily take into account the ecosystems' capacity to support such activities. This is particularly true in the Saguenay Fjord, where ice fishing is very popular. Generally speaking, groundfish in the fjord are in good condition, but their growth is slower than in the estuary and there is little sign of the revival of fish stocks. Several research projects have been undertaken to study diminishing ice fishing catches. The marine park and its partners must continue monitoring to learn more about the populations of fish and other marine life being harvested to ensure their survival for generations to come.

### 3. Growing boat traffic

The dangers caused by boat traffic and the fact that it is on the rise are a concern for the marine park because of the environmental, conflicting use and public safety issues involved. Increased traffic means a greater risk of collisions with marine mammals. Areas particularly at risk are in the seaway and in heavy traffic zones at the mouth of the Saguenay. Over the years, the number of boats present in the marine park has increased. Boat traffic is also a source of pollution and disturbs marine mammals. The marine park, government departments and authorities involved will work together to minimize the risks and take the appropriate measures.

### 4. Respect for the environment, resources and regulations during activities at sea

Implementation of the Marine Activities Regulations represents the first step in ensuring that activities at sea are practiced with respect for the marine park's environment and resources. The marine park must now continue its actions to ensure that this becomes the norm for all visitors and users.

### 5. Adoption and implementation of a zoning plan

Zoning is a management tool designed to protect the ecosystems, habitats and species associated with the marine park, and to promote the visitor experience and the ecologically sustainable use of this protected area. (See Fact Sheet #9 for more detailed information on the zoning plan.)

## Proposed Actions

### Priorities:

- Consolidate the actions of the marine park and its partners in overseeing activities at sea (particularly whale watching tours), for example, raising awareness among captains and pleasure boaters.
- Work together with Fisheries and Oceans Canada to put into place exemplary sustainable fishing principles and procedures in order to learn more about the resources harvested, the state of those resources and the marine park's potential for sustainable management.
- Set up a permanent issue table with authorities responsible for the management of boat traffic in the marine park.

### Other actions:

- Work together with the First Nations in the co-ordination zone in order to meet sustainable fishing objectives.
- Continue partnerships aimed at monitoring ice fishing in the Saguenay Fjord.
- Implement a system for managing recreational fishing.
- Work with the regional county municipalities to harmonize marine park planning with their land use planning, for example, the protection of marshes, landscapes and watersheds.
- Develop a comprehensive management plan for the sector located at the confluence of the Saguenay and St. Lawrence rivers.

