REGIA
Marine Seismic Survey

FACT SHEET
Safeguarding Southern Right Whale

Southern Right Whales in the Otway

The Southern Right Whale is listed as Endangered under the EPBC(1) Act, due to commercial whaling in the 19th and 20th centuries reducing their numbers to fewer than 300 individuals globally. They were protected from whaling in 1935, but illegal whaling in the 1970's and a slow population growth rate (7% per annum) have kept their numbers low. Currently, it is estimated there are 13,000 individuals globally, across key wintering grounds in South Africa, Argentina, Australia, and New Zealand.

In Australia, Southern Right Whales are found along the southern coastline of the mainland and Tasmania, extending as far north as Sydney on the east coast and Perth on the west coast, with occasional sightings further north at Hervey Bay and Exmouth.
Peak mating period is from mid-July to August. Pregnant females arrive in late May/early June and depart with calves in September to October. Females will often return to calving areas they have previously used. Males and non-calving females will stay for shorter periods and depart earlier than the female-calf pairs.

A Protected Matters Search Tool (PMST) Report identified that Southern Right Whale migration and breeding occurs within areas that may be affected by underwater sound from the proposed Regia marine seismic survey (MSS).

Cultural Heritage

CGG acknowledges the cultural, spiritual, and caretaker connection to Country, of First Nations people. Through comprehensive desktop research and consultation with First Nations organisations, the cultural and spiritual significance of Koontapool (Southern Right Whale), whale songlines, ceremony and whale dreaming, was identified and included in CGG's Environment Plan (EP). To protect cultural values, both tangible and intangible, the EP has a number of measures in place, such as activity limitations and the Sea Country Protection Program.



1The Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act) and regulations are Australia's main national environmental legislation. Under the act, listed threatened species and ecological communities, such as the Southern Right Whale, have recovery plans that consider their conservation requirements and identifies actions to stop the decline of, and support the recovery of, the species.

The act came into effect on 31 July 2024, following the release of the draft plan in 2023. The first submission of the Regia MSS EP referenced the draft plan and will be updated to reference the final plan. The EP adheres to the recovery plan, see next page, and no changes to any management and mitigation measures being relied on for the management of environmental impacts and risks, or changes that affect relevant persons function, interests, or activities, are required.

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Cultural, scientific, and environmental information was gathered, allowing a full assessment of potential affects of the activity. This allowed control measures and operational procedures to be put in place, assessed and consulted on, so the activity can be carried out at an ALARP and acceptable level.



Fauna Management Plan

The Fauna Management Plan (FMP) is a control measure to ensure environmental impacts from underwater sound and the risk of a collision to fauna, such as the Southern Right Whale, will be reduced to as low as reasonably practicable (ALARP) and be of an acceptable level. The FMP includes details such as:

- A multifaced approach for the detection of whales, including the use of Marine Fauna Observers, Passive Acoustic Monitoring technologies, fixed buoy acoustic detection technologies and aerial surveys
- Activity vessels operating at low speed of no more than 5 knots during acquisition
- 30-minute pre-acquisition visual survey undertaken prior to the start-up of any seismic source, and if no SRWs are detected a 30-minute soft start will be implemented
- If Southern Right Whales are detected within 15km (as determined by specialist underwater acoustic modelling commissioned by CGG), the seismic source will be shut down
- The sound source will not be operated within 15 km of a Southern Right Whale Reproduction BIA or Habitat Critical to Survival (HCTS) while Southern Right Whales are present in the BIA and HCTS

Sea Country Protection Program

The Sea Country Protection Program (SCPP) is a measure that aims to establish and maintain a framework for Sea Country protection that manages the interaction of the activity with First Nations cultural values and sensitivities. The opportunity to participate in this program is available to all First Nations peoples and organisations whose functions, interests, or activities may be affected by the Regia MSS. This can include a connection to Sea Country or other cultural values and sensitivities.

The SCPP has the following Environmental Performance Standards, which form the requirements and expectations of the program:

- Indigenous Community Consultation
- Cultural Heritage Identification and Documentation
- Cultural Heritage Preservation
- Mitigation and Response
- Collaboration

The Fauna Management Plan (Appendix G2) and the Sea Country Protection Program (Appendix G4) can be found, along with the other EP documents on the document library of our website: www.regiamss.com.au