



Press Release
For immediate broadcast

AN EMERGENCY RESPONSE NETWORK FOR ST. LAWRENCE MARINE MAMMALS

Tadoussac, May 19, 2004 — An all-new network is set to assist marine mammals that fall victim to certain incidents in the St. Lawrence. To contact the Quebec Marine Mammal Emergency Response Network, simply dial the toll free number 1-877-7baleine. The Network is made up of government institutions and private Quebec organizations that work with marine mammals. It will begin operations this spring and become fully functional over the next few years.

Every year, in all of the world's oceans, tens of thousands of marine mammals fall victim to incidents associated to a wide range of human activities. These incidents contribute to further reducing already threatened populations and also incur economic losses for fishermen and ship owners.

The St. Lawrence is no exception to this reality. A group of experts who met for a workshop in the spring of 2002 concluded that the St. Lawrence is characterized by a wide range of incidents involving 13 species of marine mammals. This same group recommended the establishment of a network to bring together Quebec organizations and institutions that already assist St. Lawrence marine mammals.

The Quebec Marine Mammal Emergency Response Network has been mandated to organize, coordinate and implement measures to reduce the accidental death of marine mammals, save animals in trouble and intervene in cases of beached or drifting carcasses. The Network is made up of the following members: the Biodôme de Montréal, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Parks Canada, the Parc Aquarium du Québec, the Group for Research and Education on Marine

Mammals (GREMM), the Mingan Island Cetacean Study (MICS), the Réseau d'observation des mammifères marins (ROMM), the Centre Québécois pour la santé des animaux sauvages (CQSAS) and the St. Lawrence National Institute of Ecotoxicology (SLNIE).

As of now, anyone who uses the St. Lawrence or lives along its shores is invited to alert the Network by calling, toll free, **1-877-7baleine** (1-877-722-5346) for any of the following cases:

- ◆ accidental entanglement in fishing gear
- ◆ stranding
- ◆ ship strike
- ◆ drifting carcass
- ◆ a marine mammal far from its habitual distribution area

This year the Network is in charge of training regional response teams and receiving calls 24 hours a day, seven days a week. An awareness campaign for the entire Gulf, Estuary and fluvial portion of the St. Lawrence—situated between Montreal and Québec City—will inform the public of typical incidents to which marine mammals fall victim in the St. Lawrence, as well as the existence of the Network and its toll-free number.

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This press release is also available on the Internet at www.gremm.org