

THE UTILITY OF MOD SONOBUOYS FOR AMBIENT NOISE STUDIES

Kate Lidell, Amanda Field, UK Hydrographic Office, UK

This work attempts to investigate if ambient noise data collected by sonobuoys deployed by the Ministry of Defence can be used to derive background ambient noise levels for UK waters. Data used for this analysis represents a subset of the ambient noise data collected by the MOD and databased by the UKHO in support of Royal Navy operations. This study considers a total of 2715 sonobuoys deployed from RAF Nimrod maritime patrol aircraft within the UK EEZ between 1988 and 2009. These data were analysed to investigate whether any trends in ambient noise levels with time and environmental factors were apparent. Spatial analysis was performed to examine potential trends in the data collected across the UK EEZ and the influence of anthropogenic sources of noise such as shipping and offshore installations. In addition, the data were subdivided in to the ICES ecoregion areas and further analysis performed to elucidate annual trends at a regional scale.