

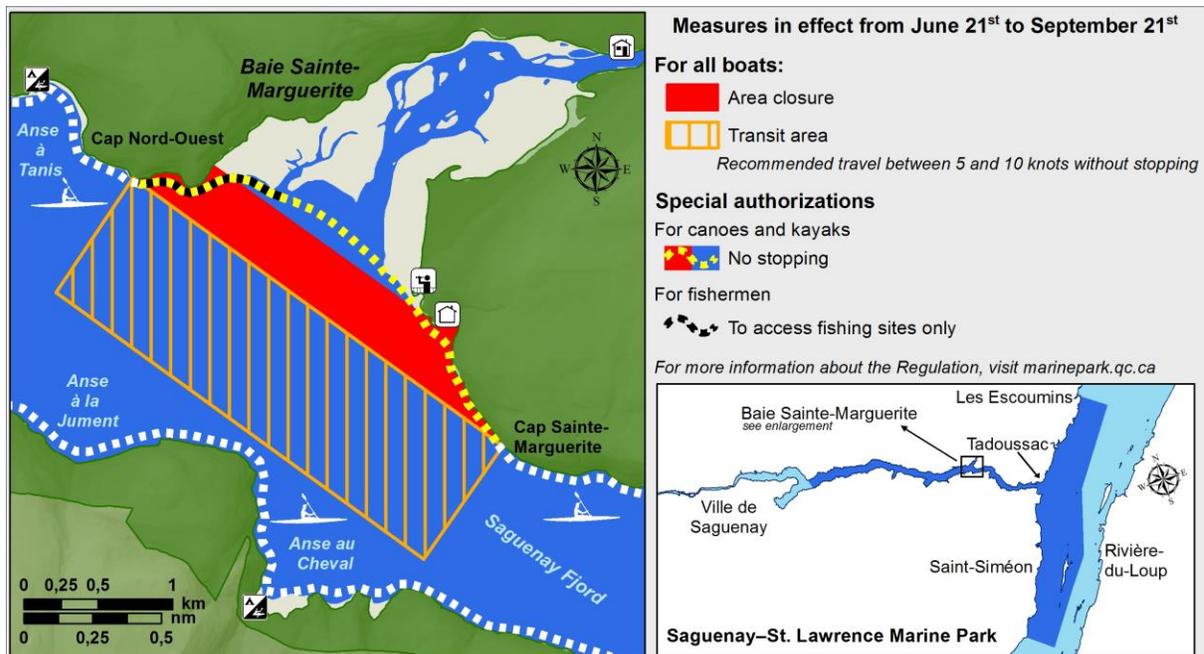


BACKGROUNDER

BELUGA PROTECTION MEASURES AT BAIE SAINTE-MARGUERITE

From June 21st to September 21st, vessels must not enter the red area closure which follows a line between Cap Nord-Ouest and Cap Sainte-Marguerite. Special authorizations are granted only for kayaks, canoes and recreational fishermen who must travel without stopping along a corridor within 10 metres of the shore in shallow areas. The map below shows behaviours to adopt in order to offer a quiet place for belugas.

This area closure at Baie Sainte-Marguerite applies under the *Marine Activities in Saguenay–St. Lawrence Marine Park Regulations* (SOR / 2002-76).



Map 1 : beluga protection measures at Baie Sainte-Marguerite

At all times in the Marine Park, all watercraft must comply with the *Marine Activities in Saguenay–St. Lawrence Marine Park Regulations*. These regulations protect marine mammals and allow for special measures to minimize disturbances for species at risk, such as the St. Lawrence Beluga. The following behaviours must be adopted in the Marine Park:

- All watercraft must respect a distance of at least 400 metres from whale species at risk, including belugas.
- Motorized boats must travel between 5 and 10 knots while staying the course until there are at least 926 metres (a half nautical mile) between their boat and belugas.

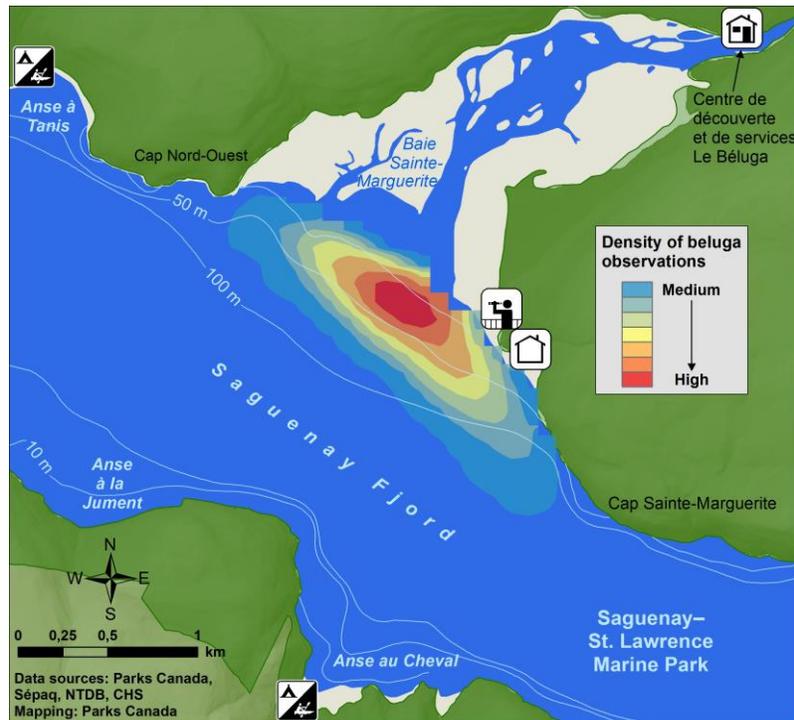
It is therefore strongly recommended at all times to navigate the indicated transit zone in front the bay, between 5 and 10 knots without stopping. The purpose of this transit area is to favour respect of the Marine Activities in the Saguenay–St. Lawrence Marine Park Regulations since beluga whales are often present in the Baie Sainte-Marguerite sector.



Science at the service of conservation

The Saguenay–St. Lawrence Marine Park and its surrounding area are at the heart of critical summertime habitat of the endangered St. Lawrence Beluga. The St. Lawrence Estuary population of belugas has about three times fewer calves being born than 20 years ago and newborn and female mortalities are on the rise. The portion of the Saguenay situated between the mouth of the Fjord and Baie Sainte-Marguerite is one of the areas most used by females and their young during summer.

Since 2003, researchers from Parks Canada and the *Société des établissements de plein-air du Québec* (Sépaq) have been observing beluga whales at Baie Sainte-Marguerite. The knowledge acquired over the years has made it possible to identify the areas where beluga whales are most often present (see map below). The analysis of the data also shows that this portion of the critical habitat of the St. Lawrence Beluga is intensively frequented by females and their young during summer. Important feeding, calving and rearing areas for beluga whales require greater protection to ensure the recovery of the species.



Map 2 : Density of beluga observations at Baie Sainte-Marguerite