

September 2, 2020

Invitation to Pledge to Protect Southern Resident Orcas

Dear Commodore/Club Leader,

We seek your help in recovering the critically endangered southern resident orcas. Since 1998, the population has declined precipitously, to a current day near-historical low of just 72 individuals. The recent news that at least three females are pregnant is a ray of hope for this struggling population.

It is critical to give the pregnant orcas in all three pods the best possible chance of having healthy calves, by giving them more space and quieter waters to find food, rest, socialize, and birth and raise their young. **We are requesting your help in getting the word out to boaters on the seriousness of the situation and the opportunity to take a pledge to protect the orcas during this time.**

The threats faced by the orcas are all human-caused: lack of salmon, toxic accumulations, and noise and disturbance from boats. Studies show that noise and salmon availability are inextricably linked. Boaters therefore have an important and immediate role to play in the recovery of J, K and L pods.

We are asking all sail and power boaters, kayakers, and jet skiers to avoid the southern resident orcas while out on the water, and to take the following pledge by clicking [here](#). We ask that you share this information and encourage your members to take the pledge.

As a boater in the Salish Sea, I pledge to protect the southern resident orcas, and give the pregnant orcas in all three pods the best possible chance of having healthy calves, by giving them more space and quieter waters to find food and communicate with each other. Over the next year:

I commit to staying 1/2 nautical mile (1,000 yards or 1 kilometer) away from the endangered southern resident orcas, to give them the space and quiet that they need.

If I encounter orcas, I will not approach or follow them, but instead will slow down (as Washington State law requires) to reduce noise, and quietly depart, to a distance of at least ½ nautical mile where possible.

If unable to differentiate between the endangered southern resident orcas and transient orcas, I will treat all orcas as southern residents and take the aforementioned precautions.

I will encourage people I know who own or operate boats (motorized or non-motorized) to also take this pledge.

Reducing noise and disturbance on the water is one thing we can do that will help right now, by making it easier for the orcas to forage for scarce salmon, rest, socialize, and birth and raise healthy calves.

We hope you will share this information and the pledge opportunity with your members, and also consider taking a similar pledge as an organization on behalf of your boating community. We will help publicize your leadership in press releases, blog posts, and social media.

We envision a brighter future when the orcas are recovered, thriving in healthy and abundant seas. But that day will never come unless we act boldly and courageously to protect them now, and give them the space and the salmon they need. Please commit to stop watching the Southern Residents, and join with us to make the Salish Sea a place that can sustain them again.

Pledge organizers are Friends of the San Juans, Natural Resources Defense Council, Seattle Aquarium, The Whale Trail, Washington Environmental Council. We are joined by the undersigned in our request.

Thank you for considering, and we look forward to hearing from you. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to any of the organizers.

Sincerely,

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Donna Sandstrom, Director, The Whale Trail (donna@thewhaletrail.org)
Former Member, Governor Inslee's Task Force on Southern Resident Orca Recovery

Joe Scordino, Former Deputy Regional Administrator, NOAA Fisheries (Retired)

Timothy J. Ragen, Ph.D., Former Executive Director, U.S. Marine Mammal Commission (Retired)

Christopher W. Clark, Ph.D., Imogene Johnson Senior Scientist, Bioacoustics Research Program,
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Will Hall, Mayor, City of Shoreline
Former Member, Governor Inslee's Task Force on Southern Resident Orca Recovery

Butch Smith, Former Member, Governor Inslee's Task Force on Southern Resident Orca Recovery

Brendan Flynn, Puget Sound Commercial Fisherman
Former Member, Governor Inslee's Task Force on Southern Resident Orca Recovery

Christianne Wilhelmson, Executive Director, Georgia Strait Alliance

Misty MacDuffy, Wild Salmon Program Director, Raincoast Conservation Foundation

Sophia Ressler, Washington Wildlife Advocate, Staff Attorney, Center for Biological Diversity

Chris Connolly, Pacific Northwest Field Representative, Endangered Species Coalition

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