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2022 Salish Sea Ecosystem Conference
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Southern Resident Killer Whale Task Force Recommendations: Moving forward with recovery

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Orca Recovery Task Force Recommendations

Salish Sea Ecosystem Conference

April 26, 2022

By Tara Galuska, Governor's Salmon Recovery Office

Orca Task Force Recommendations



The Washington State Governor's Southern Resident Killer Whale Task Force
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ORCA RECOVERY
www.governor.wa.gov/sites/default/files/OrcaTaskForce_FinalReportandRecommendations_11.07.19.pdf

1 Significantly increase investment in restoration and acquisition of habitat in areas where Chinook stocks most benefit Southern Resident orcas.	2 Immediately fund acquisition and restoration of nearshore habitat to increase the abundance of forage fish for salmon sustenance.	3 Apply and enforce laws that protect habitat.	4 Immediately strengthen protection of Chinook and forage fish habitat through legislation that amends existing statutes, agency rulemaking and/or agency policy.	5 Develop incentives to encourage voluntary actions to protect habitat.	6 Significantly increase hatchery production and programs to benefit Southern Resident orcas consistent with sustainable fisheries and stock management, available habitat, recovery plans and the Endangered Species Act. Hatchery increases need to be done in concert with significantly increased habitat protection and restoration measures.	7 Prepare an implementation strategy to reestablish salmon runs above existing dams, increasing prey availability for Southern Resident orcas.
8 Increase spill to benefit Chinook for Southern Residents by reducing total dissolved solids (TDS) in the Columbia River.	9 Establish a stakeholder process to assess potential freshwater or estuarine habitat for Chinook in the Southern Resident orca range.	10 Support full implementation and funding of the 2018-20 Pacific Salmon Treaty.	11 Reduce Chinook bycatch in West Coast commercial fisheries.	12 Direct the appropriate agencies to work with tribes and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to determine if proposed harbor seal and sea lion predation is a limiting factor for Chinook in Puget Sound and along Washington's outer coast and evaluate potential management actions.	13 Support authorization and other actions to more effectively manage principal predator of salmon in the Columbia River.	14 Reduce populations of nonnative predatory fish species that prey upon or compete with Chinook.
15 Monitor forage fish populations to inform decisions on harvest and management actions that provide for sufficient foodwebs to support increased abundance of Chinook.	16 Support the Puget Sound zooplankton sampling program as a Chinook and forage fish management tool.	17 Establish a statewide "go-slow" bubble for small vessels and commercial whale watching vessels within half a nautical mile of Southern Resident orcas.	18 Establish a limited-entry whale-watching permit system for commercial whale-watching vessels and commercial kayak groups in the inland waters of Washington state to increase acoustic and physical refuge opportunities for the orcas.	19 Create an annual Orca Protection endorsement for all recreational boaters to ensure all boaters are educated on how to limit boating impacts to orcas.	20 Increase enforcement capacity and fully enforce regulations on small vessels to provide protection to Southern Residents.	21 Discourage the use of echo sounders and underwater transducers within 1 kilometer of orcas.
22 Implement shipping noise-reduction initiatives and monitoring programs, coordinating with Canadian and U.S. authorities.	23 Reduce noise from the Washington state ferries by accelerating the transition to quieter and more fuel-efficient vessels and implementing other strategies to reduce ferry noise when Southern Residents are present.	24 Reduce the threat of oil spills in Puget Sound to the survival of Southern Residents.	25 Coordinate with the Navy in 2019 to discuss reduction of noise and disturbance affecting Southern Resident orcas from military exercises and Navy aircraft.	26 Revise chapter 77.15.740 RCW to increase the buffer to 400 yards behind the orcas.	27 Require permit applications for activities that may cause noise or disturbance to orcas to include a mitigation plan required to explicitly address potential impacts to orcas.	28 Require permit applications for activities that may cause noise or disturbance to orcas to include a mitigation plan required to explicitly address potential impacts to orcas.
29 Accelerate the implementation of the ban on polychlorinated biphenyls in state-purchased products and make information available online for other purchasers.	30 Identify, prioritize and take action on chemicals that impact orcas and their prey.	31 Reduce stormwater threats and accelerate clean-up of toxics harmful to orcas.	32 Improve effectiveness, implementation and enforcement of National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permits to address direct threats to Southern Resident orcas and their prey.	33 Increase monitoring of toxic substances in marine waters; create and deploy adaptive management strategies to reduce threats to orcas and their prey.	34 Provide sustainable funding for implementation of recommendations.	35 Conduct research, science and monitoring to inform decision-making on adaptive management and implementation of actions to recover Southern Residents.
36 Monitor progress of implementation and identify needed enhancements.	37 Protect against regulatory rollback by the federal and state.	38 Explicitly include orcas in the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit process for advanced wastewater treatment in Puget Sound to reduce nutrients in wastewater discharges to Puget Sound by 2022.	39 Establish a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit process for advanced wastewater treatment in Puget Sound to reduce nutrients in wastewater discharges to Puget Sound by 2022.	40 Better align existing nonpoint programs with nutrient reduction activities and explore new ways to achieve the necessary nonpoint source nutrient reductions.	34 Provide sustainable funding for implementation of recommendations.	35 Conduct research, science and monitoring to inform decision-making on adaptive management and implementation of actions to recover Southern Residents.
43 Take aggressive, comprehensive and sustained action to reduce human-caused greenhouse gas emissions, with the goal of achieving net-zero emissions by 2050.	44 Increase Washington's ability to understand, reduce, remediate, and adapt to the risks of climate change and sea level rise.	45 Mitigate the impact of a changing climate by accelerating and increasing the resiliency of the natural resource systems, populations and programs that support Washington's climate change resiliency.	46 Expand the Governor's Maritime Blue scope of work and provide funding to implement the recommendations of the Puget Sound Marine Resource Policy and Action Plan.	47 Identify and mitigate increased threats to Southern Residents from contaminants due to climate change and ocean acidification. Prioritize actions that proactively reduce exposure where the increased impacts are expected to be most severe.	48 Adopt and implement policies, incentives and regulations that support the protection of critical habitat and sensitive ecosystems, enable and enforce responsible growth, and support the recovery of orcas at the state, county, tribal and municipal level.	49 Conduct a comprehensive environmental review and take action to minimize potential whale-strike risk and underwater noise posed by the growing number and distribution of fast-ferries and water taxis in Southern Resident critical habitat.

MORE SALMON

LESS NOISE AND DISTURBANCE

LESS POLLUTION

FUND, MONITOR, ADAPT

ADDRESS CLIMATE

FUTURE GROWTH