

Southern Resident Orca Task Force FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Bolded recommendations require legislative policy and/or funding:

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 adjusting total dissolved gas allowances at the Snake and Columbia River dams.
9. Establish a stakeholder process to discuss potential breaching or removal of the lower Snake River Dams for the benefit of Southern Resident orcas.
10. Support full implementation and funding of the 2019–28 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 pinniped (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 pinniped predation 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 feedstocks 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. Determine how permit applications in Washington state that could increase traffic and vessel impacts could be required to explicitly address potential impacts to orcas.
28. Suspend viewing of Southern Resident 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 all recommendations.**
35. **Conduct research, science and monitoring to inform decision-making, adaptive management and implementation of actions to recover Southern Residents.**
36. Monitor progress of implementation and identify needed enhancements.
37. Protect against regulatory rollbacks at the federal and state level.
38. **Explore setting minimum standards for local stormwater funding to ensure that all programs have the resources necessary to protect water quality.**
39. **Develop a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit framework 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.
41. **Collect high-quality nutrient data in watersheds to fill key knowledge gaps of baseline conditions.**

42. **Create one or more entities with authority and funding to recover and advocate for Southern Resident orcas by implementing task force recommendations, creating new recommendations as needed and reporting to the public, governor and tribal co-managers on status.**
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 consequences of ocean acidification.**
45. **Mitigate the impact of a changing climate by accelerating and increasing action to increase the resiliency and vitality of salmon populations and the ecosystems on which they depend.**
46. **Expand the Governor's Maritime Blue scope of work and provide funding to implement recommendations from the Southern Resident Orca Task Force and pursue shipping and other maritime innovations that benefit Southern Residents.**
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 for future growth and development to prevent any further degradation of critical habitat and sensitive ecosystems; enable and channel population growth in ways that result in net ecological gain; evaluate and report outcomes for all jurisdictions 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.