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October 8, 2019

### MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Council Members

**FROM:** Stacy Horton, Washington Policy Analyst/ Biologist

**SUBJECT:** ORCA Task Force

### BACKGROUND:

**Presenters:** Dr. Les Purce and Stephanie Solien, Co-Chairs of the ORCA Task Force

**Summary:** The Southern Resident Killer Whales (SRKW) are listed as Endangered under the Endangered Species Act. In 2017, the SRKW population declined to a 30-year low of 74 animals. In response to the population decline, Governor Inslee issued an Executive Order in 2018 requiring state agencies to take immediate action to protect the remaining SRKW population. The ORCA Task Force, convened since 2018, includes state, federal, tribal, and local governments and PUDs, and utilities, as well as environmental focused citizen groups. The Task Force and its sub-committees developed recommendations for the Governor to consider and pass on to the 2019 state legislature. The final scheduled Task Force meeting was held in early October, with discussion of options to continue governance associated with recovery of the SRKW. Les and Stephanie are here today to give the Council an overview of the Task Force and the accomplishments to date.

**Background:** Southern Resident ORCA Task Force Report and Recommendations  
[https://www.governor.wa.gov/sites/default/files/OrcaTaskForce\\_reportandrecommendations\\_11.16.18.pdf](https://www.governor.wa.gov/sites/default/files/OrcaTaskForce_reportandrecommendations_11.16.18.pdf)

GOVERNOR'S  
SOUTHERN RESIDENT

**ORCA**

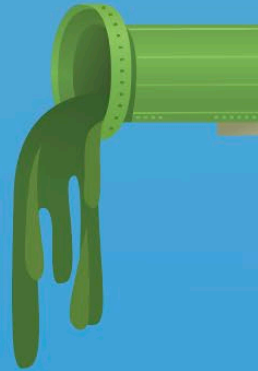
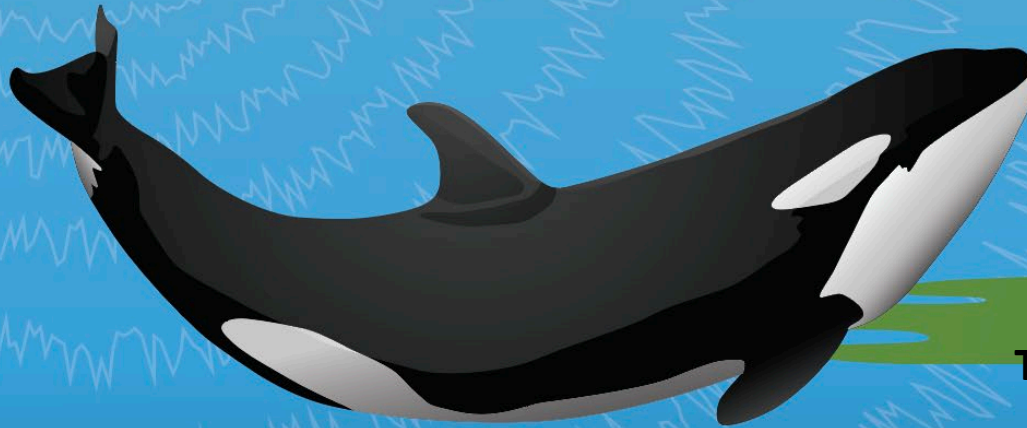
TASK FORCE



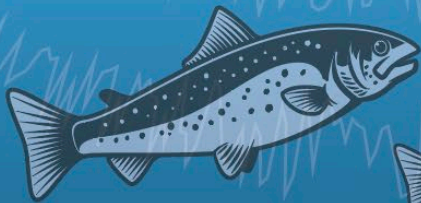
# Why are Southern Resident orca dying?



Too much noise



Too much pollution



Too few fish







## WHAT IS WASHINGTON DOING TO HELP ORCAS?



Over the past several years, Washington state has been working to protect the ecosystem that supports orcas. Saving our southern resident killer whales requires us to tackle many challenges, both in the short-term and over the coming decades.

# Governor Inslee takes action



# Governor launches 2-year Task Force





# Complex problem calls for diverse input



# 2018 (Year 1) Task Force Recommendations

36 recommendations addressing:

- ✓ **Prey:** 16 recommendations
- ✓ **Vessel Noise & Disturbance:** 10 recommendations
- ✓ **Contaminants:** 10 recommendations



Associated Press photo



# Prey Recommendations





# Vessels Recommendations





# Contaminants Recommendations





# Governor's overall budget proposals for orca recovery

Budget	Recommendation
Operating	\$66.3 M
Capital	\$594.8 M
Transportation	\$408.7 M
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1.07 B</b>

# Governor's proposed orca budget vs enacted orca budget

Funding by Threat	(Dollars in Millions)		
Budget	Governor	Conference	Enacted
Prey	\$ 783.23	\$ 635.79	\$ 810.79
Vessels	\$ 121.30	\$ 143.55	\$ 143.55
Contaminants	\$ 160.82	\$ 150.51	\$ 150.51
Science and Support	\$ 4.68	\$ 3.55	\$ 3.55
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 1,070.04</b>	<b>\$ 933.40</b>	<b>\$ 1,108.40</b>



# Legislation passed in 2019

- **ESHB 1578**—oil transportation safety
- **2SHB 1579**— increase Chinook salmon and other orca prey abundance
- **2SSB 5577**—reduce vessel noise and disturbance of orca
- **SSB 5135**—toxic pollution prevention

# 2019 (Year 2) Task Force focus

A faded background image of an orca breaching the water surface. The orca is dark grey/black with a white patch on its forehead. It is captured in mid-leap, with its tail and part of its body visible above the water. The water is light blue and white with splashes.

- Climate change
- Population growth and land development
- Life after the Task Force
- Double down on 2018 recommendations



# Progress since Year 1

- Increased hatchery production
- Provide whale watching guidelines
- Vessel traffic near orcas decreased
- New authority to ban harmful chemicals
- Funding for water quality enforcement
- Funding for fish barrier removal and protection of salmon habitat
- Funding for contaminant prevention and cleanup
- Reduce risk of oil spills

# What still needs to happen

- Fully fund salmon recovery plans
- Investigate and address pinniped predation
- Increase funding for enforcement
- Reduce vessel noise and disturbance from recreational boaters, shipping, and the Navy
- Maintain MTCA funding to prevent and clean up toxics
- Increase funding for stormwater infrastructure and management
- Provide funding to monitor effectiveness
- Transition one-time investments into ongoing funding
- Prevent northern pike expansion in the Columbia River



# Lessons learned and emerging issues



- Continue research, seek new technology, and adapt actions for salmon and orca recovery
- New vessels-related considerations related to Navy operations
- As methods are available to reduce toxic runoff from state highways work should be accelerated
- Fund local governments facilities planning through 2070 to address wastewater, sewage and stormwater issues in relation to population growth



# **Funding, monitoring, and accountability**

## **Life After The Task Force - One new recommendation**

- 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.



# Reduce contaminants and human sources of nutrients

## Contaminants - 5 new recommendations

- No regulatory rollbacks
- Ensure funding for local stormwater programs
- Develop NPDES permit framework and advanced wastewater treatment to reduce nutrients
- Align non-point program with nutrient reduction activities
- Collect data about nutrient discharges

# Reduce threats from climate change



## 5 new recommendations

- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions, net zero by 2050
- Understand, reduce, remediate, adapt to ocean acidification
- Increase resiliency of salmon populations and habitat
- Expand on Maritime Blue to pursue innovations to shipping and maritime business
- Identify and mitigate threats due to contaminants



# Reduce threats from population growth and land development



## 2 new recommendations

- Policies, incentives, and regulations for future growth to protect critical habitat and sensitive ecosystems
- Comprehensive environmental review and actions to minimize whale strikes and underwater noise due to fast ferries and water taxis

# Task Force Timeline

- **Oct. 7:** final Task Force meeting
- **October 14-25:** Public comment on final report and recommendations

<https://www.governor.wa.gov/issues/issues/energy-environment/southern-resident-orca-recovery/task-force>

- **Nov. 8:** final report and recommendations delivered to Governor
- **LEGISLATIVE SESSION**



