

Southern Resident Killer Whale Task Force Meeting #1: Summary

May 1, 2018 in Olympia

Approved June 14, 2018

Attending: *(This list includes only those who signed the sign-in sheet)*

Task Force members:

Amy Scarton	Washington State Department of Transportation
Amy Windrope	Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Commissioner Andy Hover	Okanogan County
Bardow Lewis	Vice Chairman, Suquamish Tribe
Brendan Flynn	Commercial Fisherman
Butch Smith	Ilwaco Charters
Cecilia Gobin	Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission
Chad Bowechop	Makah Tribe
Evan Sheffels	Washington State Farm Bureau
George Harris	NW Marine Trade Association
Jacques White	Long Live The Kings
Commissioner Jamie Stephens	San Juan County
Lisa Wilson and Nikolaus Lewis, sitting in for Chairman Jay Julius	Lummi Nation
Jeff Dickison	Squaxin Island Tribe
Jeff Friedman	Pacific Whale Watch Association
Joe Gaydos	The SeaDoc Society
Kaleen Cottingham	Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office
Casey Baldwin, sitting in for Karen Condon	Colville Confederated Tribes
Kathy Pittis	Port of Anacortes
Kelly McLain	Washington State Department of Agriculture
Ken Balcomb	Center for Whale Research
Kristin Swenddal and Ted Sturdevant	Washington State Department of Natural Resources
Les Purce	Task Force Co-Chair
Lynne Barre	NOAA
Maia Bellon	Washington State Department of Ecology
Mark Doumit	Washington Forest Protection Association

Mindy Roberts	Washington Environmental Council
P. Brent Nichols	Spokane Tribe
Paul McCollum	Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe
Rep. Brian Blake	WA House of Representatives (D)
Rep. Drew MacEwen	WA House of Representatives (R)
Ron Garner	Puget Sound Anglers
Ron Shultz	Washington State Conservation Commission
Gary Wilburn, sitting in for Sen. Kevin Ranker	WA State Senate (D)
Sheida Sahandy	Puget Sound Partnership
Stephanie Solien	Task Force Co-Chair
Chairman Tom Wooten	Samish Indian Nation
Trina Wellman	Northern Economics, Inc.
Virginia Painter	Washington State Parks
Mayor Will Hall	Mayor, City of Shoreline

Staff, Steering Committee, presenters, and Cascadia Consulting team:

Derek Day	Washington State Department of Ecology
Heather Bartlett	Washington State Department of Ecology
Jim Cahill	Office of Financial Management
Laura Blackmore	Puget Sound Partnership
Leslie Connelly	Office of Financial Management
Marc Daudon	The Caspian Group
Nora Nickum	Project Manager, Cascadia Consulting Group
Penny Becker	Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Rob Duff	Office of Governor Inslee
Steve Martin	Governor's Salmon Recovery Office
Susan Gulick	Facilitator, Sound Resolutions
Teresa Mongillo	NOAA
Todd Hass	Puget Sound Partnership
Tom Laurie	Washington State Department of Ecology

OPENING AND INTRODUCTIONS

Following the Tribal welcome and blessing, all Task Force members introduced themselves, and the co-chairs gave introductory remarks.

Nora Nickum, the consulting team project manager, gave an overview of the Task Force charge and work flow; opportunities for public comment; and Working Group, Steering Committee, and consultant team support for the Task Force. This presentation is available with the other presentations of the day on the [SRKW website](#).

GOVERNOR'S ADDRESS

Governor Jay Inslee gave an address, opening by saying that the Task Force has the bold, necessary, and heartfelt mission to protect orcas for our great-grandchildren. He said that we cannot solve the orca demise problem unless we *all* make a commitment. The survival of orcas depends on all Washingtonians being engaged. He noted that there are a lot of challenges, but said that our biggest challenge is the myth of impossibility. He closed by saying that we don't have a lot of time, because we need to tee up ideas ahead of the legislative session.

During the question and answer period, Task Force members raised pinniped management issues, cultural identity, hatchery production cuts, the pros and cons of increasing hatchery production in different geographies, the Snake River dams, and the need to think outside the box. The Governor stressed that it will be necessary to do some politically difficult things, and he asked Task Force members to go ahead and take on all of the hard issues. He talked about the need for a suite of solutions, not just one, and said that he would be very willing to accept consensus recommendations from the Task Force that will allow us to move forward for the orcas, even if they are hard decisions.

TASK FORCE ROUND ROBIN

We asked Task Force members to share their greatest hopes for this effort. In addition to a few mentions of specific interventions that Task Force members hope will be included in the report, the following themes emerged.

Task Force members hope to:

- Find common ground, work as a team, and be able to communicate beyond all of our differences.
- Make a real difference for the orcas, and also for salmon, people, and the entire ecosystem. Make sure that our grandchildren and great-grandchildren get to see the orcas.
- Bring together diverse perspectives, interests, jurisdictions, and expertise. Look at this as a regional planning effort, not limited to Puget Sound.
- Be guided by the best available science which includes social sciences, avoid coming in with preconceived notions, and act quickly with the information we can get now.
- Have a holistic, comprehensive focus, get creative, and break out of our silos.

- Recognize all of the elephants in the room, address the really hard questions, and are transparent in our discussions of the tradeoffs. Help the people of Washington have the courage and strength to make different and difficult choices.
- Build on what's working, including successful existing programs and models.
- Develop a suite of multiple solutions, rather than looking for just one solution. Come up with strong and inclusive policies and bold, concrete, implementable actions at different scales.
- Provide a Matrix of Authorities for each proposed solution – that is to say: Identify which federal, state or tribal authority has the lead agency role in addressing the proposed solutions as well as identifying which other federal, state or tribal authority has vested interests in said proposed solutions as cooperating agencies.
- Build broad awareness about the issues, and help all Washingtonians feel committed to this. Engage landowners so they feel like they are part of the solution. Help the public see what we're doing and if we're making progress in the long term, to keep up the pressure over time.
- Have a ripple effect and create a model for tackling other major challenges in a collaborative way.

TASK FORCE CHARTER

The Task Force adopted the charter as presented in the meeting materials. The charter is available on the [SRKW website](#).

KILLER WHALE 101: OVERVIEW OF STATUS AND THREATS

Task Force members heard presentations on SRKW biology, the three major threats (prey availability, vessels and noise, and contaminants), and work being done by NOAA. Presentations are available on the [SRKW website](#).

A short video by NOAA, *Recovering the Southern Resident Killer Whale with Research and Conservation*, was shown during the lunch break. It is available at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MFQljQvbkw>.

QUESTIONS AND IDEAS FOR WORKING GROUPS

Task Force members were invited to raise questions and ideas that they want the three Working Groups to consider as they begin to develop options. Those inputs are listed below.

Prey availability:

Data/information needs:

- What is the target (sustainable number of salmon to support SRKWs)?
- What do we know about quality of fish, in addition to quantity of fish? What data is there on the reduced average size of Chinook?

- Which stocks are most important for SRKWs?
 - When and where are runs needed in the SRKW range? When and where are they available?
 - What do we know about marine survival rates of different stocks?
 - Is there scientific community consensus about which stocks we should focus on? Which ones will have the biggest impact for SRKWs?
 - Can you show the differences in diet and geographies between the J, K, and L pods?
- Which salmon stocks could rebound the fastest?
- What do the data show in terms of contaminants hindering salmon out-migration or returning adults? (Also shared this question with the Toxics WG.)
- Habitat
 - Think about habitat holistically; include forest health, which affects temperature and sedimentation in the waterways.
- Hatcheries
 - Have we already adequately addressed hatchery food issues and contaminants?
 - How much has hatchery production decreased in recent years?
 - When does a hatchery fish coming back become a wild stock?
 - How much do hatchery fish cost by the time they are in a release situation? How does that compare to the cost of taking down a dam or restoring habitat to allow wild fish to spawn?
- Harvest
 - Can you share quantifiable data on what is being caught by recreational fishers as well as by foreign interests outside of the EEZ?
 - Can you share data on how many Puget Sound Chinook are caught in BC and Alaska waters as well as commercially within Washington's EEZ?
 - Where are we with the by-catch reduction program?
- Predation
 - What do we know about pinnipeds and pinniped management? A white paper that lays out what we know about pinniped predation of Chinook salmon (both the out-migrating smolts and the adult fish) would be really useful.

When considering options:

- Habitat
 - What can we do to recover forage fish?
 - Forage fish monitoring should be an immediate action to help us know how to restore those populations.
 - How can agencies prioritize the authority they have today to avoid destruction of more forage fish habitat, in the face of development pressures?

- Culverts
 - Prioritize projects that get us the most opened-up habitat for the money.
 - Can we do a critical run orca overlay on the existing prioritization process for culverts?
 - The gas tax discussion needs to include high-cost infrastructure needs like culvert removal.
- Importance of Growth Management Act, zoning, etc. in the context of all of the population growth in the region.
- Consider climate change impacts.
- Put habitat back in saltwater. Tire reefs, old boats, and creosote pilings have been cleaned up, but no replacement habitat was put in place.
- Hatcheries
 - What hatchery production practices will result in larger Chinook?
 - What hatchery production practices will provide food over more of the year?
 - Fall chum would be easier to produce a lot of – so it might be worth it, even if chum are not as nutritious as Chinook?
 - Consider increased funding to enable existing state hatcheries to operate at higher capacity.
 - Put a contingency on recommending that folks take eggs for hatchery production – wait until after fall returns.
 - Can we use the old net pens—which will have to be closed by companies in Washington—to produce the right kind of salmon?
 - Maintain protections in place for wild stocks. Be careful how we increase hatchery production.
 - There are institutional issues; it's not so easy to just flip a switch and produce more fish.
 - Hatchery reform would need to be done correctly in accordance with the Hatchery Scientific Review Group.
 - We need good ideas about how to streamline the NEPA and EIS processes for hatchery facility strategies so when we come to agreement on an idea we can actually implement it.
- Hydropower
 - The US Army Corps of Engineers could put the Snake River dams into non-operational status and bypass, using their existing authority. Funding-wise, that should be examined.
- Predation
 - Pinniped management options.
- Overarching
 - Look for common threads among existing plans. Look at how to get existing Columbia River plans fully funded.

- Highlight actions that will have short, medium, and long-term impact.
- Can we have a duration for the different activities that are short-term temporal fixes? In other words, when do we stop?
- Geographic:
 - Be sure to pay attention to the Columbia River.
 - Think bigger than just Washington State. Have good, strong, early connections with British Columbia, Oregon, and California.
- Come up with wild, crazy, silly ideas too. Don't dismiss anything out of hand. (E.g., can the SRKWs learn from the transients to eat seals and sea lions, like divers taught eels and groupers to eat lion fish in the Caribbean?)
- How can we urge the federal government to provide funds for work on river basins on the west coast that are critical for SRKW recovery? What should we advocate for during the Puget Sound Day on the Hill (this month) and the west coast group's trip next month about salmon recovery funding?

Vessels:

Data/information needs:

- What acoustic types have the greatest impact on orcas?
- Is the Navy's use of sonar equipment out of Bremerton and other places impacting the whales?
- What are the issues with noise not from vessels (e.g., pile-driving)?
- Are contaminants from the bottom paints used on vessels a problem? (Also shared this one with the Toxics WG.)
- What does it cost to reduce one decibel?

When considering options:

- What are some options for dealing with the fact that depth sounders are pinging at a frequency that interferes with orca foraging?
- Consider quieter ferries that can participate in a program similar to or in conjunction with the Canadian ECHO program.
- Can we change the geographic distribution of vessels?
- Call out the voluntary no-go zones in navigational charts.
- Make sure that the State of Washington's boater education program for new boaters includes the no-go zone – last this TF member checked, it wasn't included.
- Consider time-of-day restrictions that could reduce impact of vessel noise on orcas.
- Consider go-slow zones in addition to no-go zones.
- Make sure other observers on the water know about the whale watch industry's voluntary guidelines, including slow speed zones that drastically reduce sound—if other observers have that information, they can do the same.

- Consider creating a communication system between the whale watching fleet and commercial shipping, so the whale watching fleet can let them know where whales are at certain times and they can slow down in those areas.
- What incentives does industry need to participate voluntarily?
- Request to include specific language about Kinder Morgan and the risk of an oil spill.
- Consider the impacts of the options on all users (recreational, tribal, and commercial).

Contaminants:

Data/information needs:

- What proportion of contaminants come from each source (stormwater, wastewater, point source pollution, etc.)?
- What does the data show in terms of contaminants hindering salmon out-migration or returning adults?
- Are there particular toxins that are of concern at specific [salmon] life stages? Especially curious if there is information about toxins of particular concern at the juvenile life stage.
- What are the different levels of contaminants across the three SRKW pods?
- What are the largest sources of each of the contaminants?
- What programs are in place to reduce the major contaminants?
- Why are transients doing better than the SRKWs, given that they have higher toxic loads?
- What are the relevant findings from the fish consumption rate study?
- Are contaminants from the bottom paints used on vessels a problem?

When considering options:

- How can we accelerate actions to reduce the level of contaminants in the orcas?
- How do we factor in the different levels of contaminants across the three SRKW pods?
- The population of our cities and counties will continue to grow, and we are going to have to increase the number of housing units. If we do that through redevelopment and zero conversion of farms and forests, how much of a difference would it make?
- Do we need to develop sewer facilities to treat other kinds of toxins, like prescription drugs?
- DOE sometimes needs authority to ban or limit or reduce certain types of chemicals that are allowed in our stream of commerce (e.g., legislature tackled copper in brake pads and boat paint). DOE would like to see that kind of recommendation.

For all three Working Groups:

- Can you account for some of the social and economic and environmental costs and benefits, keep a tally of that along the way, and avoid leaving it to the end?
- Take a social-psychological look at how the reports are going to play externally. Think about how you tell the story in order to increase chances of getting funding.

PUBLIC COMMENT

The following is a summary of the issues and suggestions raised during the public comment period in the afternoon.

- Olivia Hart, PNW Water Protection, talked about the water rights treaty and urged the Task Force to use layman's terms to enable people to follow along.
- Jim Waddell talked about salmon recovery and said that the US Army Corps of Engineers should act now to breach the Snake River dams to bring back smolts.
- Kelly Iriye talked about salmon recovery and asked the Task Force to work fast to make a difference in the next six months.
- Rich Osborne encouraged the Task Force to think about the culture of killer whales and how cultural factors could be engaged, and provided an article: Whitehead, H., Rendell, L. E., Osborne, R. W., & Wursig, B. (2004). Culture and conservation of non-humans with reference to whales and dolphins: review and new directions. *Biological Conservation*, 120, 427-437.
- Jesse Nightwalker from the Palouse Tribe talked about treaty rights and endangered species and said that the Snake River dams should be breached.
- Derek Hoshiko from Greenpeace said that the Kinder Morgan pipeline and its spurs pose an increased risk of an oil spill in the Salish Sea.
- Stephanie Buffum from Friends of the San Juans encouraged Task Force members to consider saying no to things crossing their desks that compromise salmon, feeder bluffs, and other things in our state.
- Giulia Good Stefani from NRDC asked the Task Force to keep the Columbia River in mind as a ready habitat for salmon; she said that NRDC is petitioning the Canadian government for immediate action to save the killer whales and the Task Force can find some action items there that could be applicable here.
- Ben Enticknap from Oceana submitted a letter from the Orca Salmon Alliance; Ben urged the Task Force to move forward swiftly with proposed actions that can help salmon and other limiting factors, and to use an ecosystem-based approach rather than an engineering approach to SRKW recovery.
- Rein Atteman from Stand Up To Oil said that the Vessel and Noise Working Group needs to address oil spill prevention and response.
- Dr. Deborah Giles from UW Friday Harbor Labs encouraged the creation of a fourth Working Group on education and outreach, and encouraged the Prey Working Group to make sure that whales have a quota.
- Whitney Neugebauer from Whale Scout encouraged the Task Force to put wild, sustainable fish first and to build on and help fund existing salmon recovery plans.
- Another member of the public [did not sign up, so name was not recorded] said that forestry and dam removal should be addressed in the reports.

SUGGESTED AGENDA ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

- Develop a matrix of tribal, federal, and state authorities and interests.
- Coordinating with the Canadians.

NEXT STEPS/ACTION ITEMS

- A Doodle poll will be coming by the end of the week schedule remaining meetings in 2018.
- Task Force members can email Working Group leads with any ideas before the next meeting. The earlier we get ideas and questions in the hopper, the better.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

- The next Task Force meeting will be held on Thursday, June 14, at the Lacey Community Center (time to be announced).
- Upcoming Working Group meetings:
 - Toxics: May 21 (time and venue to be announced).
 - Vessels and Noise: May 24, 9am-3pm, in Seattle (venue to be announced).
 - Prey: May 29 in Olympia (time and venue to be announced).