

## How can you help the Southern Residents?

### Minimize Runoff

Pesticides, fertilizers, and other harmful chemicals from homes and yards entering the ecosystem get amplified up the food chain to salmon and killer whales. These contaminants accumulate in the whales' tissues and can impact their health.

**Learn more:** <https://go.usa.gov/xdwtH>

### Reduce Water Use

The water from our tap comes from the rivers where the Southern Resident's main food source, salmon, live. Reducing your water use helps salmon by keeping more water in their habitat, allowing them to spawn, grow, and migrate to the ocean where the whales feed.

**Learn more:** <https://go.usa.gov/xdwt7>

### Reduce Vessel Noise and Give Whales Space

The whales hunt by listening for their salmon prey in the depths and must hear each other at great distances. Noise from engines, propellers, and echosounders can drown out sounds they need to hear, preventing them from finding food and communicating. Though silent, even kayaks can disturb them. U.S. regulations require all vessels to stay at least 300 yards away on either side of Southern Residents and stay out of their path, keeping a distance of 400 yards in front and behind them.

**Learn more:** [www.BeWhaleWise.org](http://www.BeWhaleWise.org)

### See something? Say something!

If you witness others harassing or disturbing the Southern Residents or other marine mammals, file a report at [www.bewhalewise.org/report-violators](http://www.bewhalewise.org/report-violators).

To report stranded, injured, or dead marine mammals, call the **NOAA Fisheries West Coast Marine Mammal Stranding Network hotline: 1-866-767-6114**.

### Be a Voice for the Southern Residents

Track local policies that affect whales and salmon. Issues such as transportation, new construction, and zoning affect the waterways these animals call home. Support policies that help their conservation and recovery. Let local representatives know Southern Residents and salmon are important to you.

## Learn More

### Take Action

<https://go.usa.gov/xv6uJ>

### Species Information

<https://go.usa.gov/xv6uP>

### Southern Resident Connections Series

<https://go.usa.gov/xv6uy>

### K-12 Educational Resources

<https://go.usa.gov/xv6ut>

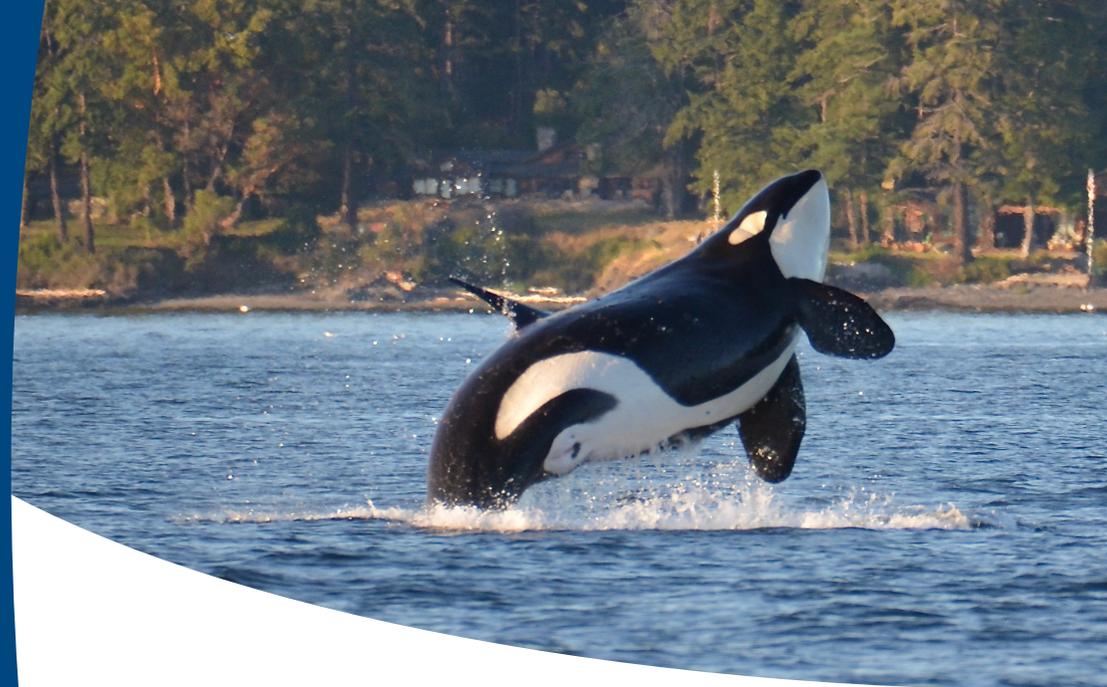
### Recovery Plan

<https://go.usa.gov/xv6JY>

National Marine Fisheries Service

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

U.S. Department of Commerce



# Taking Action for Southern Resident Killer Whales

The Southern Resident killer whales are icons of the Pacific Northwest. They inspire interest, curiosity, and awe around the globe. They are an integral thread woven into the fabric of the ecosystem and cultures of the region. With just over 70 individuals as of March 2020, Southern Residents are critically endangered.

Keep reading to learn about the threats facing the Southern Residents and how you—yes you!—can make a difference. Collectively, our small actions add up to impactful changes.



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## Who are the Southern Resident killer whales?

Several different populations and ecotypes of killer whales are found throughout the world. Southern Resident killer whales are the only endangered population of killer whales in the United States. Killer whales are highly social. Most live in social groups called pods. Southern Residents travel in three distinct groups: J, K, and L pods. Within each pod there are several family units, each descended from a single female ancestor. These units, called matriline, are each typically composed of an adult female, the matriarch, and her female and male offspring. Pods typically consist of a few to about 20 whales. Larger groups sometimes form a temporary “superpod” for social interaction, mating, or seasonal concentration of prey.

## Where do they live?

Southern Residents are found mostly off British Columbia, Washington, and Oregon, and occasionally as far north as Southeast Alaska or as far south as California. They spend much of the summer in coastal waters of the Pacific Northwest and around the San

Juan Islands to follow their main food source, Chinook salmon. During winter, salmon decrease in inland waters and are more dispersed in coastal waters. Southern Residents hunt for salmon throughout their entire coastal range, as well as the Salish Sea.

## What do they eat?

Chinook salmon is the preferred prey of the Southern Residents. They feed on Chinook salmon year-round, especially in the spring and summer when the whales occupy inland waters. During the fall they add coho salmon to their diet. In winter, they also eat chum salmon and some groundfish, such as halibut and lingcod.

## How do they communicate?

Killer whales rely on underwater sound to feed, communicate, and navigate. Pod members use clicks, known as echolocation, to find prey and communicate with each other through whistles and pulsed calls. Each pod possesses a unique set of calls that are learned and culturally transmitted among individuals. These calls maintain group cohesion and serve as family badges. They also use these calls to coordinate hunting strategies and work as a team to catch prey.

## Why are the whales at risk?

The Southern Resident population is closely tied to the overall health of the ecosystem. Insufficient prey (i.e., salmon), high levels of contaminants, and impacts from vessel noise and overcrowding from boat traffic pose serious threats to this endangered population. Evidence of inbreeding has been found in the population, which poses additional risk.

## What is NOAA Fisheries doing?

Recovering Southern Residents depends in part on restoring and protecting habitat for the Chinook salmon that they prey on—river, estuarine, and coastal habitat. NOAA Fisheries is focusing restoration funds where they make the biggest difference for salmon and the whales. We also implemented vessel regulations to reduce disturbance to the whales. Together with fishermen, we work to ensure enough Chinook salmon are present each year in foraging times and areas most important to the whales, so seafood consumers can feel confident in ordering West Coast salmon.

**Learn more:** <https://go.usa.gov/xdwtw>.

