



Local Leaders,

*This is our fifth in a series of emails to elevate core issues we've been working on. Let us know what you think or if there are any other issues spotlights you'd be interested in.*

This email contains information about orca recovery and June being Orca Action Month. However, if you're short on time and can't read the whole thing, check out how you can engage in Orca Action Month [HERE](#).

**Let's talk about orca recovery.** With 75 individuals in all (and only 24 reproductive females), the Southern Resident orcas are in a precarious situation. A reality where future generations only know of our resident orca pods as a fabled story from once upon a time is a very real potential. To address the three major threats facing this endangered population (lack of salmon, toxic contamination, and vessel noise and disturbance), Governor Inslee established the Orca Recovery Task Force in 2018—which included our Puget Sound Program Director, Mindy Roberts.

That same year, the world watched in agony, in sorrow, and in disbelief as Tahlequah grieved over the death of her newborn calf by carrying the body for 17 days and over 1,000 miles. It was Tahlequah's cry for help and call to action for us to take bold action.

The Orca Recovery Task Force developed [nearly 50 recommendations](#); some of which have been implemented, some of which are in progress, and some which still await action. WCV and many other partners continue to work towards accomplishing these recommendations, whether in the state legislative sessions, agency rulemaking processes, federal dam removal advocacy, or finding actions we can take right now on the ground within local communities, including [Orcas Love Raingardens](#) or [Be Whale Wise](#) or salmon habitat restoration projects.

### **What is Orca Action Month?**

Orca Action Month aims to bring us together to raise awareness, inspire action, and celebrate one of the most iconic species in the Pacific Northwest and the Salish Sea. June marks the 15th annual Orca Action Month in Washington state and 6<sup>th</sup> annual in Oregon and British Columbia. Just one example of the many events happening this June is a series of Saturday kayak tours we're hosting with Alki Kayak Tours:

ORCA ACTION MONTH

# Kayak Tour & Guest Speaker

Saturdays in June  
10am-1pm | \$65

5 JUN Vessel Noise and Disturbance Impacts

12 JUN Southern Resident Orca Intro

19 JUN Pollution Impacts

26 JUN Lack of Food Impacts

Alki Kayak Tours WASHINGTON ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL

Coordinated by the Orca Salmon Alliance (see *Partner Highlight* below), Orca Action Month coordinates events across our region and throughout the month to elevate our resident orca pods, educate the public on challenges these orcas face, and discover what we ALL can do to act to protect them. Check out how you can engage in Orca Action Month [HERE](#)

**Why this matters for your community?**

Orca Action Month’s 2021 theme is “We are Family,” underscoring the parallels between Southern Resident orca families and our own families. The health of our Southern Resident orcas is an indicator of the health of the Salish Sea and the health of our own families. The same threats of toxic contamination and loss of salmon that these orca pods face also directly impact us.

The choice of “We are Family” for this year’s Orca Action Month is a hope for folks to get to know the Southern Resident orcas better, along with the connections they have to us. Did you know our resident orca pods live in a matriarchal society? Mothers stay with the children throughout their lives (even after their children have children) forming tight knit family bonds. Did you know that orcas are considered relatives to many of the Coast Salish Tribes (also referred to as blackfish) and featured prominently in their stories and art? Even if you did know all this, it’s important we keep sharing these connections. The cultural and spiritual impact of orcas is immeasurable for our region.

### Local Leadership Opportunities

Orca recovery requires action by all of us, and at every level of government. For local governments, your connection to orca recovery permeates so much of the work you do, including:

- land use planning
- oil spill prevention
- shoreline management
- salmon habitat restoration and protection
- transportation planning
- green infrastructure investment
- water treatment

Your daily decisions as local leaders will impact Southern Resident orcas. There is no easy how-to guide for your role in orca recovery, but we are here as a resource. Let us know when you have questions or ideas. We want to support you in orca recovery in whatever way we can.

### Partner Spotlight: Orca Salmon Alliance

Washington Conservation Voters' sister organization Washington Environmental Council, is a member of the Orca Salmon Alliance, who's objective is to prevent the extinction of the Southern Resident orcas by recovering the wild Chinook salmon, upon which the whales depend for their survival. Check out the Orca Salmon Alliance [website](#) for more information.

### Staff Spotlight: Rein Attemann



Rein is the Puget Sound Campaign Manager at Washington Conservation Voters and Washington Environmental Council. In addition to orca recovery, Rein focuses on oil spill prevention, healthy shorelines, and Lower Snake River dam removal. Rein has been a strong advocate for the Puget Sound for fifteen years and loves to connect with folks passionate about its recovery.

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Thanks for reading! We'll continue to share information and resources on critical issues. Let us know what else we can do to be a resource for environmental progress in your community.

Best,  
Emily & Danielle

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