
HOUSE BILL 2417

State of Washington

65th Legislature

2018 Regular Session

By Representatives Blake and Walsh

Prefiled 01/05/18.

1 AN ACT Relating to southern resident orca recovery; creating new
2 sections; making an appropriation; and providing an expiration date.

3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) The legislature finds that the
5 population of orcas that inhabit Washington waters, commonly referred
6 to as southern resident orcas, are a significant cultural and
7 economic resource in the Pacific Northwest and their presence
8 represents a key indicator of a healthy marine environment.

9 (2) The community of southern resident orcas consists of
10 approximately seventy-six orcas, divided into subgroups, or pods,
11 known as J, K, and L pods. In the spring and summer months, southern
12 resident orcas travel primarily through the inland waters of
13 Washington and British Columbia, a body of water sometimes referred
14 to as the Salish Sea. In winter months, southern resident orcas are
15 known to travel to the coastal waters of the Pacific Ocean between
16 northern California and British Columbia, where they feed on runs of
17 returning salmon. In particular, recent studies have shown that
18 southern resident orcas spend a significant amount of the winter
19 months in the vicinity of the mouth of the Columbia river. Although
20 other populations of orcas may feed on multiple food sources,
21 including marine mammals, southern resident orcas are unique in that

1 their diet consists almost exclusively of salmon, primarily Chinook
2 salmon.

3 (3) Unfortunately, the population of southern resident orcas is
4 at its lowest level in more than three decades and seven southern
5 resident orcas died in 2016 alone. Southern resident orcas are listed
6 as an endangered species under both federal and state law, as well as
7 under Canada's species at risk act. Recent deaths of southern
8 resident orcas have been attributed to malnutrition and declining
9 southern resident orca populations are believed to be due at least in
10 part to declining salmon populations. Researchers have suggested that
11 southern resident orcas need an abundant, widely available supply of
12 salmon, especially Chinook salmon, throughout the year and throughout
13 the extent of their range.

14 (4) The legislature finds that a thriving southern resident orca
15 population depends on an abundant supply of salmon, especially
16 Chinook salmon. In order to halt the decline and to begin the
17 recovery of the southern resident orca population, the legislature
18 further finds that it is necessary to enhance salmon populations in
19 Washington by increasing the production of Chinook salmon and other
20 salmon at state hatcheries.

21 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** The sum of one million five hundred fifty
22 thousand dollars, or as much thereof as may be necessary, is
23 appropriated for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2019, from the
24 general fund to the department of fish and wildlife for the purposes
25 of increasing hatchery production of Chinook salmon and other salmon
26 by ten million fish per year, at the following state-operated
27 hatcheries: Kalama falls, Beaver creek, Naselle, Humptulips,
28 Skookumchuck, and Lake Aberdeen.

29 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** (1) A legislative task force on the
30 recovery of southern resident orcas is established. The purpose of
31 the task force is to gather evidence and make recommendations
32 regarding the recovery of southern resident orcas.

33 (2) The task force must consist of the following members:

34 (a) Two members from each of the two largest caucuses of the
35 senate, appointed by the president of the senate;

36 (b) Two members from each of the two largest caucuses of the
37 house of representatives, appointed by the speaker of the house of
38 representatives;

1 (c) A representative from the department of ecology, appointed by
2 the director of the department of ecology;

3 (d) A representative from the department of fish and wildlife,
4 appointed by the director of the department of fish and wildlife;

5 (e) One representative from an organization dedicated to the
6 conservation of southern resident orcas;

7 (f) One representative from an organization dedicated to the
8 conservation of salmon;

9 (g) One representative from an organization representing
10 businesses reliant on tourism related to southern resident orcas; and

11 (h) Representatives of two federally recognized Indian tribes,
12 one invited by recommendation of the Northwest Indian fisheries
13 commission, and one invited by recommendation of the Columbia river
14 intertribal fish commission.

15 (3) One cochair of the task force must be a member of the largest
16 caucus of the house of representatives, and one cochair must be a
17 member of the largest caucus of the senate, as those caucuses existed
18 as of the effective date of this section.

19 (4) The first meeting of the task force must occur by June 30,
20 2018.

21 (5) Staff support for the task force must be provided by the
22 office of program research and senate committee services. The
23 department of ecology and the department of fish and wildlife shall
24 cooperate with the task force and provide information as the cochairs
25 reasonably request.

26 (6) Within existing appropriations, the expenses of the
27 operations of the task force, including the expenses associated with
28 the task force's meetings, must be paid jointly and in equal amounts
29 by the senate and the house of representatives. Task force
30 expenditures are subject to approval by the house executive rules
31 committee and the senate facility and operations committee.
32 Legislative members of the task force are reimbursed for travel
33 expenses in accordance with RCW 44.04.120. Nonlegislative members are
34 not entitled to be reimbursed for travel expenses if they are elected
35 officials or are participating on behalf of an employer, governmental
36 entity, or other organization. Any reimbursement for other
37 nonlegislative members is subject to chapter 43.03 RCW.

38 (7) By November 15, 2019, the joint legislative task force must
39 make recommendations to the legislature.

40 (8) The joint legislative task force expires December 31, 2019.

1 (9) This section expires January 1, 2020.

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