



News Release

For Immediate Release

Government of Canada announces enhanced measures for protecting British Columbia's Southern Resident killer whales

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Vancouver, British Columbia

Government of Canada

Canada has some of the most spectacular coastlines in the world, and our oceans are home to marine life of many kinds, including the iconic Southern Resident killer whale. These awe-inspiring mammals are celebrated by British Columbians and all Canadians and hold significant cultural meaning for coastal First Nations.

However, Southern Resident killer whales are at risk. The population is small and declining, with only 75 individuals, and they are exposed to a number of serious threats.

The Government of Canada has formally recognized that these whales face imminent threats to survival and recovery – and we understand that saving these iconic mammals requires comprehensive and immediate action.

Through initiatives included in the \$1.5B Oceans Protection Plan and more recently in the \$167.4M Whales Initiative, we have taken significant steps to address key threats to the Southern Resident killer whales. Measures have been focused on addressing the three key threats to these whales: limited availability of their prey; physical and acoustic disturbance, and contaminants in the marine ecosystem. In October 2018, the Government announced a further investment of \$61.5M over 5 years to address the threats to Southern Resident killer whales.

Today, the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, the Honourable Jonathan Wilkinson, and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Terry Beech, announced enhanced measures – building upon existing measures – to support the recovery of the Southern Resident killer whales.

These enhanced measures announced today were informed by direct consultations with First Nations, stakeholders and communities. These measures are also the product of significant work done by five technical working groups comprised of First Nations, government and scientific and stakeholder advisors. These working groups were convened to discuss measures that had previously been introduced and to provide advice to the Government of Canada regarding what should be done going forward to assist with Southern Resident killer whale recovery.

Enhanced measures for 2019 include:

- **Prey** – In 2019 we are moving forward with area-based closures in for recreational and commercial salmon fisheries in several key foraging areas, and the pilot implementation of a voluntary bubble in the vicinity of killer whales. The focus of prey-related initiatives is on ensuring there is sufficient food for the Southern Resident killer whales to remain healthy. The 2019 measures build on experience gained from measures introduced in 2018 as well as significant input received from interested parties.

Further, to increase the abundance of Chinook salmon, the primary prey for these whales, DFO has committed to releasing an additional 1 million juvenile Chinook annually from Chilliwack Hatchery for five years to support Southern Resident killer whale recovery. These particular Chinook stocks are important for

Southern Resident Killer Whales and are available in the whales' critical habitat year-round.

- **Noise from Marine Shipping** – For commercial vessels: In partnership with the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority's ECHO program, commercial vessels will be asked to slow down over a longer distance through Haro Strait and Boundary Pass, starting as early as June 1. Inshore traffic will be asked to transit further from shore in the Strait of Juan de Fuca.

For general vessel traffic: As of June 1, vessels throughout the critical habitat of the Southern Resident killer whale, including recreational boats and whale watching vessels, will be required to stay at least 400 metres away from all killer whales, with exception for commercial whale watching companies who have obtained authorization from the Minister of Transport, who would be allowed to approach Transient killer whales up to 200 metres..

Vessels are also asked to reduce their speed to less than 7 knots if they are within 1,000 metres of killer whales in certain areas, and to turn off their echo sounders and turn engines to neutral idle if a whale is within 400 metres.

- **Interim Sanctuary Zones** – To maximize protections in three key foraging areas, interim sanctuary zones will be created off Pender Island, Saturna Island and at Swiftsure Bank. In addition to fishery closures, no vessel traffic will be permitted in these areas from June 1 to October 31, subject to certain exceptions for emergency and Indigenous vessels.
- **Contaminants** – To further reduce contaminants affecting whales and their prey, we are enhancing regulatory control of five key persistent organic pollutants (flame retardants, oil and gas repellents) and prohibiting two toxic flame retardants.

These enhanced measures, taken in the context of the broader set of measures previously announced by the Government of Canada, will help to promote the recovery of the Southern Resident killer whale in a manner that considers and accounts for legitimate concerns of First Nations, coastal communities and the fishing and transportation industries.

In support of the measures being announced today the Government of Canada has signed two important agreements.

- A Conservation Agreement with the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority, the Pacific Pilotage Association, and the Chamber of Shipping of BC, the Shipping Federation of Canada, the Cruise Lines International Association, the Council of Marine Carriers and the International Ship Owners Alliance of Canada. The goal of this five-year agreement is to reduce disturbance to Southern Resident killer whales from large commercial vessels that call on the Port of Vancouver or otherwise operate in [Southern Resident killer whale critical habitat](#). The agreement commits the parties to do this through the development and implementation of threat reduction measures to Southern Resident killer whale recovery.
- The Government of Canada will be entering into an agreement with the Pacific Whale Watch Association who will refrain from offering tours on Southern Resident killer whales and will commit to taking other stewardship actions. This commitment will also allow them to approach other types of killer whales to a distance of 200 metres in the area.

Effectively protecting and recovering the Southern Resident killer whales will require a long-term approach that requires leadership on the part of the Government of Canada and the active collaboration of many partners. The measures announced today reflect a collective effort to recover the Southern Resident killer whale.

Quotes

“We are committed to working thoughtfully and collaboratively to address the decline and to promote the recovery of the Southern Resident killer whale population. The measures announced today reflect the commitment to recover the whales in a manner that takes in account important economic factors and collaboration with First Nations and coastal communities.”

The Honourable Jonathan Wilkinson, Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard

“Thanks to the progress we are making through the Oceans Protection Plan, our coasts and marine species are more protected than ever. I want to thank vessel operators for their ongoing collaboration and commitment to help the recovery of the Southern Resident killer whale. The Government of Canada looks forward to continuing this collaboration as we implement the best and most effective means to reduce threats.”

The Honourable Marc Garneau, Minister of Transport

“Here on the West Coast, killer whales have immense cultural significance for Indigenous peoples and coastal communities. That’s why the new and enhanced measures announced today under the Oceans Protection Plan are so important, and I’m grateful to be part of this significant announcement.”

Terry Beech, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Member of Parliament for Burnaby North – Seymour

Quick Facts

- These initiatives support the recovery of Canada’s endangered whale populations by addressing the main threats they face: lack of food, noise and physical disturbance from vessels, and contaminants from land-based sources.
- The Government of Canada is drawing on recommendations from technical working groups and subsequent consultations on five topics: prey availability and accessibility, exploring development of proposed Southern Resident killer whale sanctuaries, vessel noise measures related to large commercial vessels, additional vessel noise measures, and contaminants.

Related Products:

- [Background: Suite of measure to protect Southern Resident killer whales in 2019](#)
- [Background: What we’ve done and what’s new to protect Southern Resident killer whales](#)
- [Background: Partnership agreements](#)
- [Map: Fisheries management measures to protect Southern Resident killer whales](#)

Associated Links

- [Protecting our Coasts - Oceans Protection Plan](#)
- [Let’s Talk – Oceans Protection Plan](#)
- [Killer whale \(Northeast Pacific, southern resident population\) summary report](#)
- [Protecting Canada’s Endangered Whales](#)
- [Watching marine wildlife](#)
- [\\$167.4 million Whales Initiative: Protecting the Southern Resident killer whale](#)

- [Oceans Protection Plan Report to Canadians](#)

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For more information:

Jocelyn Lubczuk
Press Secretary
Office of the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans
and the Canadian Coast Guard
613-992-3474
Jocelyn.lubczuk@dfo-mpo.gc.ca

Media Relations
Fisheries and Oceans Canada
613-990-7537
Media.xncr@dfo-mpo.gc.ca

Delphine Denis
Press Secretary
Office of the Honourable Marc Garneau
613-991-0700
Delphine.Denis@tc.gc.ca

Media Relations
Transport Canada, Ottawa
613-993-0055
media@tc.gc.ca

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