



Killer Whale Research and Conservation

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FUNDING PARTNERS

- BNSF Railway
- SeaWorld Entertainment
- U.S. Navy
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

ABOUT NFWF

Chartered by Congress in 1984, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) protects and restores the nation's fish, wildlife, plants and habitats.

Working with federal, corporate and individual partners, NFWF has funded more than 6,000 organizations and generated a total conservation impact of \$8.1 billion.

Learn more at www.nfwf.org

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Killer whales

OVERVIEW

Killer whales are a defining feature of the ecological and cultural fabric of Pacific Northwest communities. The Southern Resident population of killer whales in the Salish Sea are the only known resident population in the United States. This population declined sharply in the early 1970s, and, even with more than two decades of increased protection, the population stands at less than 80 individuals and showing little signs of recovery. The Killer Whale Research and Conservation Program (KWRCP) was established in 2015 to support efforts to advance understanding and conservation of the Southern Resident killer whale population in the Pacific Northwest. This objective is supported through increasing prey availability by restoring salmon runs, improving water quality and reducing disturbance of habitat, and filling critical research gaps in the health, demographics, and stressors. In the first eight years, KWRCP has awarded 55 grants totaling \$6.5 million, drawing an additional \$11.1 million in grantee match for a total conservation investment of more than \$17.6 million. As a result of these investments, more than 8.5 million people have been reached, and volunteers have contributed more than 8,000 hours of work in support of the grants. In 2023, The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), SeaWorld Entertainment, BNSF Railway, U.S. Navy, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration announced seven new grant awards totaling more than \$1.1 million. The seven awards announced will generate more than \$1.3 million in match from the grantees, providing a total conservation impact of more than \$2.4 million.

This year's awards will address two priority strategies: increasing prey availability and increasing habitat quality. NFWF takes a full life-cycle approach to increasing the Southern Resident population's priority prey, Chinook salmon, by restoring key freshwater and nearshore habitats for fry and adult salmon and the forage fish that they rely on for food. This year's slate features a grant to the State of Washington to work with Tribes and NGOs on addressing a barrier to these restoration projects – sourcing trees that are used to restore the in-stream habitat complexity that has been lost over the years from deforestation. Two other projects will engage recreational and commercial boaters to reduce disturbance to the whales to increase the quality of their habitat while also increasing their hunting success. Projects on this year's slate will also support the expansion of other ongoing programs that have been successful in reducing these impacts. Bolstering these threat reduction strategies is research on whale health and outreach to foster a community that cares about their health and well-being.

(continued)

2022 GRANTS

The following seven projects seek to restore and enhance critical Southern Resident killer whale habitat in the Pacific Northwest. Projects will monitor the health of individuals, expand outreach across the Northwest, and implement various activities to improve prey availability of Chinook salmon.

Analyzing Body Conditions of Killer Whales through Aerial Imagery (WA)

Grantee: SR3 SeaLife Response, Rehabilitation and Research
 Grant Amount:\$172,700
 Matching Funds:\$238,700
 Total Project Amount:\$411,400
 Collect and analyze drone images to measure the health of Southern Resident killer whales in the Salish Sea. Project will identify health concerns of vulnerable individuals, females in late-stage pregnancy and slow-growing juveniles and guide adaptive management practices.

Assessing Habitat and Boater Regulations for Killer Whales Through Expanded Outreach and Monitoring (WA)

Grantee: The Whale Museum
 Grant Amount:\$147,800
 Matching Funds:\$67,600
 Total Project Amount:\$215,400
 Expand on current Soundwatch operations in education, outreach and monitoring into the Puget Sound region. Project will continue support for existing Soundwatch program to reduce and monitor boating activity around killer whales while expanding capacity south into Puget Sound.

Providing Killer Whale Educational Programing to Coastal Classrooms in Western Washington

Grantee: Killer Whale Tales
 Grant Amount:\$50,000
 Matching Funds:N/A
 Total Project Amount:\$50,000
 Educate students from kindergarten through eighth grade on Southern Resident killer whales’ habitat, behavior and population status. Project will increase outreach for the conservation of Southern Resident killer whales through environmental education programs across multiple schools along coastal Washington.

Establishment of a Large Woody Debris Program for Recovery of Chinook Salmon (WA)

Grantee: Washington Department of Natural Resources
 Grant Amount:\$400,000
 Matching Funds:\$610,000
 Total Project Amount:\$1,010,000
 Engage with local salmon recovery organizations and timber companies to facilitate large woody debris installations for habitat restoration efforts. Project will establish a Large Woody Debris Program in the Snohomish Watershed to build local habitat restoration capacity for Chinook salmon, the primary diet of Southern Resident killer whales.

Providing Mariners with Real-Time Data of Killer Whale Locations in Washington

Grantee: Washington Maritime Blue
 Grant Amount:\$170,000
 Matching Funds:\$225,000
 Total Project Amount:\$395,000
 Expand on an existing Whale Report Alert System (WRAS) to provide mariners with real-time awareness of whale sightings. Project will provide information to mariners to take evasive action such as slowing or altering course to reduce impacts on Southern Resident killer whales in the Puget Sound area.

Increasing Salish Sea Chinook Abundance to Enhance Prey Availability for Killer Whales (WA)

Grantee: Long Live the Kings
 Grant Amount:\$148,500
 Matching Funds:\$152,100
 Total Project Amount:\$300,600
 Collect, analyze and synthesize data on Chinook raised using experimental rearing strategies as they return to hatcheries. Project will determine the impact of experimental strategies on Chinook abundance in attempt to increase pray availability for Southern Resident killer whales.

Building a Community-Based Network to Monitor Forage Fish for the Chinook Salmon Food Web (WA)

Grantee: Kwiaht: Center for the Historical Ecology of the Salish Sea
 Grant Amount:\$40,100
 Matching Funds:\$33,900
 Total Project Amount:\$74,000
 Expand the capacity of Treaty Tribes to increase ability to identify and analyze the gut contents and toxic loading of juvenile Chinook salmon and forage fishes. Project will obtain the first regional-scale Chinook food web data since 2014-2015 while training Tribal communities on sampling and modeling of fisheries and informing fisheries management on the conservation, recovery and exploitation of forage fishes.



Killer whale in the San Juan Islands