



Legislation Text

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File #: Res 31892, Version: 1

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**CITY OF SEATTLE**

**RESOLUTION \_\_\_\_\_**

A RESOLUTION expressing concern with the Northwest testing and training proposal of the United States Department of the Navy for Puget Sound, coastal waters from northern California through Washington State, and for Alaska.

WHEREAS, the United States Department of the Navy (“Navy”) is proposing to conduct testing and training activities in Puget Sound and coastal waters that impact marine animals; and

WHEREAS, Puget Sound is the second largest estuary in the United States with extensive shoreline, nutrient-rich waters, and diverse habitats that sustain a variety of wildlife, including the endangered Southern resident killer whale (“orca”); and

WHEREAS, within the severely declining and endangered population of Southern resident orcas, the loss of even a single orca could greatly undermine decades of recovery efforts and make recovery impossible; and

WHEREAS, whales and Coast Salish people have lived together in this region for at least 10,000 years and orcas are part of the cultural patrimony of the Coast Salish people; and

WHEREAS, the Federal government has acted to protect orcas and other marine and aquatic species through the Marine Mammal Protection Act and the Endangered Species Act; and

WHEREAS, the Washington State Legislature has further protected Southern resident orcas by implementing the recommendations of the Southern Resident Orca Task Force (“Task Force”); and

WHEREAS, the Task Force’s final report recommended coordinating with the Navy to “discuss reduction of noise and disturbance affecting Southern Resident orcas from military exercises and Navy aircraft”; and

WHEREAS, the Navy’s Draft Northwest Training and Testing Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement

(“Draft EIS”) outlines how sonar and explosives will harm marine animals, especially those that rely on sound to communicate, locate food, avoid predators, and to navigate; and

WHEREAS, dozens of creatures in the Salish Sea would be affected by the Navy’s activities, including endangered Southern resident orcas and humpback whales, specifically, the threatened Mexico Distinct Population Segment (DPS), the endangered Central America DPS, and non-listed Hawaii DPS; and

WHEREAS, naval sonar has been shown to cause whales to stop vocalizing and feeding, abandon their habitat, panic, and, under some circumstances, strand and die; and

WHEREAS, the Navy first acknowledged damaging effects of sonar in 2001 after a government-led investigation concluded that the stranding of 17 whales, and eventual death of seven, was due to acoustic or impulse trauma the animals experienced from sonars aboard US Navy ships; and

WHEREAS, in 2003 a Navy sonar training exercise in the eastern Strait of Juan de Fuca and Haro Strait caused the J pod, one of the three pods (J, K, and L) making up the Southern resident orca population, to stop foraging and exhibit abnormal behaviors and movement, change direction multiple times, and group together in shallow water where they are at increased risk of stranding; and

WHEREAS, in 2012 a juvenile Southern resident female was stranded with evidence of trauma consistent with an explosion or high-pressure impact, a week after the Canadian Navy had been conducting sonar exercises in the region; and

WHEREAS, in 2017 explosives detonated by the Canadian Navy near L pod caused the whales to group together suddenly and flee the area; and

WHEREAS, mine explosions can cause injury, disorientation, or death for an orca population and the use of mid-frequency sonar can impact orca and other marine mammals within 2,000 square miles, an area well outside the reasonable area that even highly trained marine mammal observers are able to survey; and

WHEREAS, The City of Seattle submitted public comment on the Draft EIS and underscored the need to

protect the safety and livelihood of the Southern resident orca; NOW, THEREFORE,

**BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SEATTLE, THE MAYOR  
CONCURRING, THAT:**

Section 1. The City of Seattle requests the Navy reevaluate aspects of its Northwest testing and training proposal and consider taking the following steps to reduce noise and disturbance affecting marine mammals, including the Southern resident orca:

- A. Reduce the number of events, or at least certain types of events;
- B. Reduce the intensity of events (e.g., amount of ordinance);
- C. Request additional geographical mitigation areas; and
- D. Maintain the integrity of the 50 nautical mile Marine Species Coastal Mitigation Area.

Section 2. The City of Seattle urges the Navy to use the most recent science about Puget Sound marine mammals in its analysis to prevent further harm to endangered and threatened marine mammal populations, and other marine animals impacted by its activities.

Section 3. The City of Seattle urges the Navy to expand habitat protections and cease training and testing activities when endangered Southern resident orcas, endangered and threatened distinct population segments of humpback whales, and other priority marine animals are present.

Section 4. The City of Seattle affirms its continued support for the collective work of the scientific community, environmental organizations, agency partners, and the work of Puget Sound tribes, to restore and protect Puget Sound and to reduce critical threats to the survival of Southern resident orcas, including diminished salmon, toxic contaminants, and disturbance from noise and vessel traffic.

Adopted by the City Council the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2019, and signed by  
me in open session in authentication of its adoption this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2019.

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President \_\_\_\_\_ of the City Council

The Mayor concurred the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2019.

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Jenny A. Durkan, Mayor

Filed by me this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2019.

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Monica Martinez Simmons, City Clerk

(Seal)