

FACT SHEET



Protecting Southern Resident Killer Whale Foraging Areas.

The core summer critical habitat of the endangered Southern Resident killer whales is located in the heart of the Salish Sea; a region held in high regard by the local community and Coast Salish Tribes that call the San Juan Islands home. The waters off the west coast of San Juan Island are an important foraging area for the whales. But the Southern Residents are susceptible to disturbance from noise and presence of vessels.

San Juan County Environmental Stewardship, with the support of the Marine Resources Committee undertook an effort to explore protection priorities for Southern Resident killer whale foraging areas along the westside of San Juan Island.

This project engaged both expert scientists and the community to help define defensible refuge area(s) for the whales. The west coast of San Juan Island is one of the primary migratory corridors for returning Fraser River Chinook, critical to the summer/fall diet of the Southern Residents. The area is also important salmon fishing grounds for Coast Salish Tribes, commercial and recreational fishing. The San Juan Islands are usual and accustomed fishing and hunting areas for Coast Salish Tribes.



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Project Goals

- Collect relevant scientific information through acoustic monitoring and identifying where whales are feeding.
- Determine community values through social surveys, interviews, and facilitated engagement workshops.
- Identify management actions to facilitate greater protection for foraging whales.

Project funding

Funding for this effort was secured through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, The Northwest Straits Foundation, and San Juan County.



Contact For More Information:

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**San Juan County
Marine Program**