

My name is Joel Fletcher. I am a high school soccer coach, volunteer for the Whatcom Marine Mammal Stranding Network, small business owner and resident of Blaine, Washington -- a fishing town. As a taxpayer and citizen of Whatcom County, I am demanding that additional hearings be held in Whatcom, Skagit, and San Juan Island county where salmon fishing and whale-related tourism are huge parts of our local economies. Both of them need more salmon, not just in our waters but along the entire West Coast.

The endangered Southern Resident killer whales support a multimillion dollar tourist economy in Puget Sound and the Strait of Georgia. They are perilously close to becoming too small a population to survive and reproduce, primarily due to lack of food. They are starving to death and headed for extinction. There are only 80 Southern Resident orcas remaining today. In 2016 alone, the Southern Resident population has declined by 5%, with the recent deaths from apparent malnutrition of J28, Polaris, and her calf, as well as the sudden death of the matriarch J14, Samish. At 23 years old, J28 was just coming into her own and was among the most likely females to contribute to the killer whales' recovery for years to come. Polaris's death embodies the plight of the Southern Resident killer whales.

Chinook salmon are the killer whales' primary food. Chinook salmon runs originating in the Columbia/Snake River watershed are the singular most important food source for the killer whales' survival. Chinook salmon are endangered species themselves. As we could see while watching J28 slowly starve to death this summer, there clearly are not enough Chinook salmon to sustain even the 80 Southern Residents killer whales that are alive today.

Each year the Snake River dams kill many millions of Chinook salmon juveniles as they attempt to navigate the dams and migrate down river and out to the ocean. Despite the dams, some Chinook salmon do make it to the ocean and grow to adults. The dams again exact their toll when adult Chinook return to the Columbia/Snake watershed to

spawn. The dams finish the killing cycle by impeding the Chinooks' return to their spawning grounds.

According to hundreds of scientists, and our current EIS, removal of the four Lower Snake River dams is the single most effective way to generate the abundant Columbia Basin salmon that Southern Resident killer whales need to survive and recover. Judge James Redden, the judge who presided over the decades-long Columbia/Snake River legal case involving salmon and hydropower, also believes the dams need to come down. Yet as the orcas spiral towards extinction, the federal government refuses to consider dam removal, and instead spends billions of dollars on unreasonable and speculative habitat-restoration measures to avoid significant changes to dam operations.

It is time for Congress to authorize removal of the four lower Snake River dams. We demand you remove these concrete barriers to the orcas' continued to survival.

Sincerely,

Joel Fletcher

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