

Dear Gov Jay Inlee, Sen. Patty Murray, Sen. Maria Cantwell and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Terry Flores, Executive Director Northwest RiverPartners, Judge James L. Robart Chambers,

I am writing to you in regards to the plight of the highly endangered Southern Resident Killer Whales. A highly endangered commiunity of incredible animals.

As you are now well aware yet another killer whale has died....an infant....a little girl. A female that could have been the saving grace for these whales. Talequah (J35) has been greiving for days now! Her pain and sorrow and hopelessness is felt by thousands of people all over the country. But now Talequah's health and life is in danger. As well as the remaining 75 members of the SRKW.

"Why is this death such a wrenching blow for the whales and for people who care about them?

Some numbers will spell it out. (from Orca Network [www.orcanetwork.org/...](http://www.orcanetwork.org/))

75 = current population of the Southern Resident population, a genetically distinct group of orcas, down from 98 in 1995.

5 = number of babies, none younger than 3

8 = number born in 2015, the "baby boom year", 3 of whom have since died

26 = number orcas of childbearing age, but just a few males father most of the offspring.

$\frac{3}{4}$ = proportion of newborns who have died since 1998

$\frac{2}{3}$ = pregnancies miscarried last 7 years

40 = whales born and survived since 1998

73 = whales who have died since 1998

Of those who have died, 20 were babies (under 3), 12 of "old age", including 5 very old, and 29 of childbearing age"

(<https://www.dailykos.com/stories/2018/7/28/1784085/-Sadness-in-the-Salish-Sea-another-dead-baby-in-the-SRKW-Orca-family>)

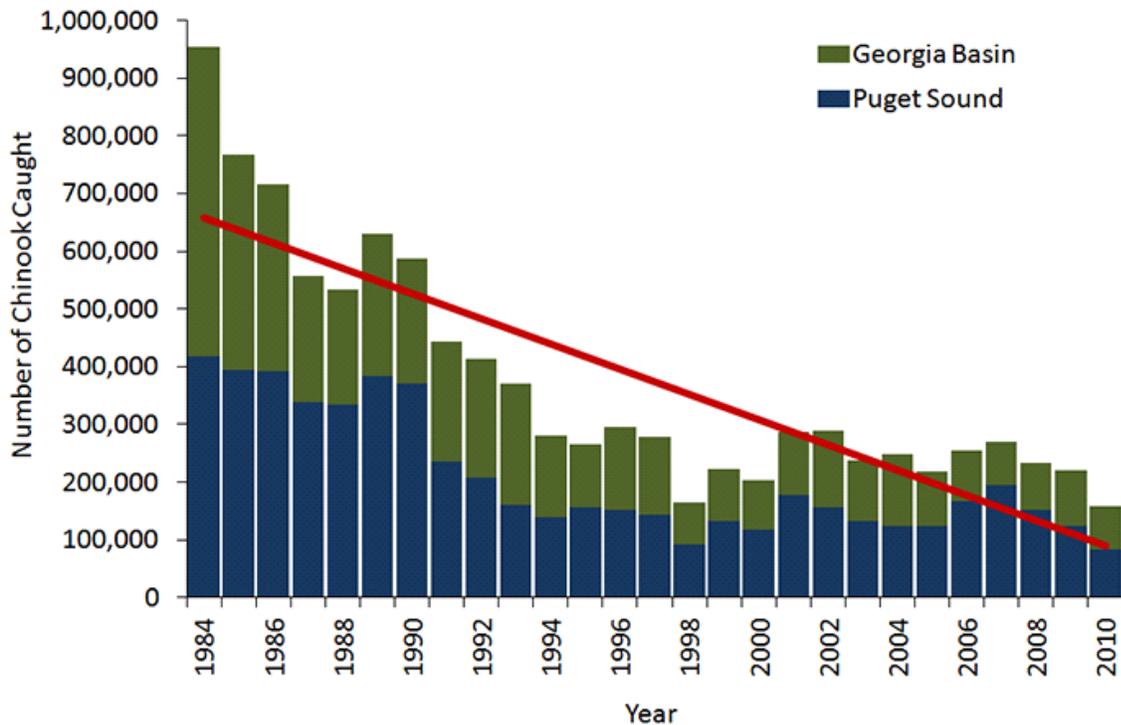
These numbers are haunting for a species that was listed as endangered in 2005! Yet NOTHING has been done to save them.

The salmon that these endangered whales need to survive on are also a concern. The numbers of chinook (what the whales exclusively feed on) are dangerously low.

"The Columbia-Snake River basin once produced more salmon than any other river system in the world. Historically, the Snake River watershed produced about half of all salmon in the basin. Today, only about 1% of the historic number of fish returns to the watershed to spawn."

"Breaching the four lower Snake River dams is the single measure most likely to recover abundant salmon and steelhead in time to permit the Southern Resident orcas to survive."
<https://srkwcsi.org/science-facts/>

Management actions have focused on reducing chinook harvests to aid in Chinook recovery.



Its even lower now! The Snake River Dams block vital spawning grounds and/or make it impossible for adult fish to even return upstream.

The way to save the salmon numbers and the killer whales is a simple one.....remove the dams. Its been done with other non-functioning dams that blocked vital breeding grounds for fish. And the fish numbers rebounded aggressively in only a few years!

"In August 2014, workers completed the largest dam removal project in U.S. history, as the final part of the 210-foot-high (64-meter-high) Glines Canyon Dam was dismantled on the Elwha River in northwestern Washington State."

"Indeed, salmon have already returned to the Elwha after nearly a century of absence, and other fish and marine creatures are thriving." <https://news.nationalgeographic.com/2016/06/largest-dam->

removal-elwha-river-restoration-environment/



Removal of the century-old Elwha Dam, October 23, 2011. It was the largest dam removal operation in U.S. history. <https://earthjustice.org/features/remove-four-lower-snake-river-dams>

The task force that was specifically created to try and come up with a viable "solution" has failed time and time again! They seemingly refuse to come to the conclusion (which all of us agree) that breaching the dams WILL bring back the salmon and aid the killer whales' survival. Why is this task force so ignorant to the solution?

Why is the blame being shifted to the seals and sea lions that also call Washington waters home? A cull of seals will NOT bring back the salmon. It will only serve to place further strain on the ecosystem.

"When it comes to protecting salmon in the Snake River, the federal government repeatedly and consistently has failed. It has violated the Endangered Species Act for more than 20 years."
<https://srkwcsi.org/orca-task-force/>

Seeing how both the Chinook Salmon and the Southern Resident Killer Whales are on the ESA, it is our and your responsibility to save them.

40,000+ people support breaching or removing the Snake River Dams! The state of Washington was warned that this would happen. The Killer Whale researchers who monitor them and know these clans best have been begging you to get on board with the removal of the dams. My question is why havent you? Why drag your heels and look the other way?

People come from all over to see them. Whale watching is a major source of income for your state! Dont you want to keep people coming back? I fell in love with Washington last year when I visited. I saw how breathtaking the forests are and how sparkling the waters are! I saw wild killer whales....in person.....for the first time! I loved the people too! They care so much for the orcas and for all the marine life. Everyone sees the problem and we are all wondering why? Why has this been such a battle?

For years now the orcas have been in a constant struggle for survival. Noise from boats, pollution and lack of enough food are putting immense strain on these wonderful beings. But the issue of the dams blocking their food source IS the priority! They are starving! Now it is time to act! It is time to stop reviewing and pondering and wondering and coming up with excuses to not address the real issue.

They need food! The removal or breaching of the 4 lower Snake River Dams must happen! There is litterally no more time to wait.

"Recent research shows that the lack of Chinook salmon, primary prey for Southern Residents, appears to be the leading cause of decline and may be responsible for a high rate of miscarriage in the whales. The restoration of Chinook salmon is imperative if this population is to recover and thrive. The removal of the four lower Snake River dams will help reestablish salmon runs that are significant to these pods and may provide the prey necessary to recover the population." <https://srkwcsi.org/the-story-of-rhapsody-j32/>

This dead baby girl IS on you! YOU have the power to save these whales.



Please do the right thing and make that phone call to get the dams breached. I hope you will make the right choice and not let this greiving mother die as well. I sincerely hope that compassion for these whales outweighs the corporate greed, disrespect, and ignorance that has caused this issue in the first place.

Sincerely,

Amanda Hughes

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P.S. I would like a response back.

CC

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Sen. Patty Murray

Sen. Maria Cantwell

Terry Flores

Judge James L. Robart Chambers