

Subject: Orca Management Plan

From: shaunalice@comcast.net

Date: Wed, 06 Jan 2010 04:45:50 +0000 (UTC)

To: Orca.Plan@noaa.gov

I am in agreement with the common sense proposals submitted below by my kayak guide neighbor who has extensive experience and knowledge of the waters surrounding the San Juan Islands. My family and I have enjoyed the beauty of the San Juan seas by way of the intimate experience of kayaking. I believe that if one gets to know a place and its environment, then one will have an affinity for that place and will want to do good by it. Kayaking on the waters is such an experience that educates and spreads the word on how to take care of the place and its creatures.

Thank you.

Shaun Hubbard

San Juan Island

I believe that the main concern for the orcas' continued survival should be: 1) restoring healthy salmon populations to Washington/Oregon and, 2) reducing bioaccumulated toxins in the environment such as PCB's. These issues are *overwhelmingly more important* than vessel interaction and NOAA personnel should be placing their greatest efforts in these areas.

Here are the suggestions for NOAA's orca management plan.

1. I support your proposal to require that MOTORIZED vessels (human-powered craft exempt) stay 200 yards away from orcas.
2. I support your proposal that MOTORIZED vessels keep clear a 400 yard right-of-way ahead of the whale's path; human-powered craft should keep a 200 yard right-of-away ahead of the whales path. It should be recognized that human-powered craft have severely lowered and thereby reduced line-of-sight which often limits their ability to spot orcas. Also, their inherently slow speed combined with wind/current effects can make it more difficult to quickly clear the way compared to motorized vessels.
3. I recommend that the orcas' critical foraging area on the west side of San Juan Island be considered a unique management area. I do not support your proposed blanket "no-go zone" as currently designed. Reductions in vessel-whale interactions can be achieved by giving right-of-way to the whales in this congested area. This unique area should be regulated in the following ways:
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 - C. Create an "no-go zone for motors" for MOTORIZED vessels (human-powered craft exempt) from Edwards Point (located just south of Deadman Bay) around Lime Kiln Point and up to San Juan County Park to be in effect year-round. This "no-go zone for motors" would extend out to 1/2 mile offshore. This area would be a kayak and human-powered craft-only zone, all other

restrictions applying. Absolutely no exemptions for recreational or commercial fishing.
D. SoundWatch / The Whale Museum has devised an excellent code of conduct / management / educational plan for dealing with kayakers and human-powered craft that is referred to as K.E.L.P. This should be supported and continued.

Subject: Orca/Vessel Management Comments
From: John Knight <johnjohnknight@hotmail.com>
Date: Sat, 09 Jan 2010 18:15:37 -0800
To: Orca.Plan@noaa.gov

Thank you for considering public comments on the proposed orca management plan.

As a frequent visitor to the San Juans, I have enjoyed kayaking, birding, nature and wildlife photography, hiking and whale watching. Some of the most memorable and, indeed, life changing, moments in the San Juans involve kayaking with the Orca on the west side of San Juan Island, along Kellet Bluff, just offshore at County Park, and throughout the islands. I have even been lucky enough to have orca swim directly under my kayak, close enough to make eye contact as the whales passed by.

I don't believe their curiosity about my kayak was in any way harmful or disruptive to the pod; rather, an important way for us to connect with the beauty and value of the orcas and of all life.

There must be a balance in our policies to both protect the natural world and yet allow for appreciation of and connection to it.

I've attached further comments from my friend and San Juan Island resident, Mark Lewis; I fully support his views and proposals in these plans.

Thank you again for your time in considering how valuable the orcas are to the San Juans.

Sincerely,

John Knight

I believe that your current focus on whale / vessel interactions is somewhat misplaced. Yes, some things need to change, hence my proposals below. However, the main concern for the orcas' continued survival should be: 1) restoring healthy salmon populations to Washington/Oregon and, 2) reducing bioaccumulated toxins in the environment such as PCB's. These issues are *overwhelmingly more important* than vessel interaction and NOAA personnel should be placing their greatest efforts in these areas.

Here are my suggestions for NOAA's orca management plan.

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Island to Eagle Point. Vessels should be required to move off shore by 1/4 mile (440 yards) when whales are present within 1/4 mile (440 yards) of a vessel and when the vessel and whales are within 1/4 mile (440 yards) from shore.

C. Create a "no-go zone for motors" for MOTORIZED vessels (human-powered craft exempt) from Edwards Point (located just south of Deadman Bay) around Lime Kiln Point and up to San Juan County Park to be in effect year-round. This "no-go zone for motors" would extend out to 1/2 mile offshore. This area would be a kayak and human-powered craft-only zone, all other restrictions applying. Absolutely no exemptions for recreational or commercial fishing.

D. SoundWatch / The Whale Museum has devised an excellent code of conduct / management / educational plan for dealing with kayakers and human-powered craft that is referred to as K.E.L.P. This should be supported and continued.

Thank you for allowing me to contribute my input.

Mark Lewis

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Subject: Orca / Vessel Management Comments
From: Matthew Szymanowicz <mszymano@gmail.com>
Date: Fri, 08 Jan 2010 15:55:57 -0600
To: Orca.Plan@noaa.gov

To whom it may concern,

I would like to comment on the proposal to shut down the westside of San Juan Island to all vessel traffic. As a current resident of San Juan Island, I believe this would not prove to be of much benefit to the Southern Resident community of Orca whales. It is a misguided management proposal with no real background information to support the effectiveness at achieving a population recovery. However, it would be more beneficial to consider the actual negative impacts effecting the Southern Residents. The main concerns of a management plan should include primarily; 1)restoring healthy salmon population to Washington/Oregon, and 2)reducing bio-accumulated toxins in the environment such as BCB's. These issues are overwhelmingly more important than vessel interaction and NOAA should be placing thier greatest efforts in these areas. I agree that motorized vessel interaction may play a role in changing the ability of ocras to locate prey, however I fail to see the link between non-motorized vehicles such as kayaks, and their role in Orca behavior.

Here are my suggestions for NOAA's Southern Resident Community management plan;

1. I support your proposal to require that **MOTORIZED** vessels (human-powered craft exempt) stay 200 yards away from orcas.
2. I support your proposal that **MOTORIZED** vessels keep clear a 400 yard right-of-way ahead of the whale's path; human-powered craft should keep a 200 yard right-of-away ahead of the whales path. It should be recognized that human-powered craft have severely lowered and thereby reduced line-of-sight which often limits their ability to spot orcas. Also, their inherently slow speed combined with wind/current effects can make it more difficult to quickly clear the way compared to motorized vessels.
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This should be supported and continued.

Thank you for allowing me to contribute my input.

Sincerely,
Matt Szymanowicz

Subject: Orca / Vessel Management Comments
From: andrew munson <munson8@gmail.com>
Date: Wed, 13 Jan 2010 21:11:11 -0500
To: Orca.Plan@noaa.gov

I'm writing to express my strong disagreement with NOAA's proposal to ban all vessels from the waters west of San Juan Island.

As an avid kayaker, I am aware that people come from all over the country to see Orcas in the San Juan Islands, making the activity a major player in the local economy. Kayaking is one of the least-invasive ways of viewing the whales due to the clean, quiet, slow, and low-profile nature of the vessel. In considering measures to protect the resident Orca population, the remediation of bioaccumulated pollutants such as PCB's and restoration of salmon populations should take the highest priority for action.

I support Mark Lewis' Orca management plan as written below:

1. I support your proposal to require that MOTORIZED vessels (human-powered craft exempt) stay 200 yards away from orcas.
2. I support your proposal that MOTORIZED vessels keep clear a 400 yard right-of-way ahead of the whale's path; human-powered craft should keep a 200 yard right-of-away ahead of the whales path. It should be recognized that human-powered craft have severely lowered and thereby reduced line-of-sight which often limits their ability to spot orcas. Also, their inherently slow speed combined with wind/current effects can make it more difficult to quickly clear the way compared to motorized vessels.
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Subject: Orca / Vessel Management Comments

From: Martine Springer <martinespringer@hotmail.com>

Date: Wed, 06 Jan 2010 14:41:09 -0800

To: Orca.Plan@noaa.gov

I have been a resident of San Juan Island for the past 18 years. I am a frequent boater and I have spent many hours on the water around the San Juan Islands enjoying all the beauty this place has to offer by kayaks, sailboats, and motorized craft as whale and wildlife watcher.

I have spoke to many individuals about this topic of vessel management not to mention all the meetings I have attended and I believe that your current focus on whale / vessel interactions is somewhat misplaced. Yes, some things need to change, hence my proposals below. However, the main concern for the orcas' continued survival should be: 1) restoring healthy salmon populations to Washington/Oregon and, 2) reducing bio-accumulated toxins in the environment such as PCB's. These issues are *overwhelmingly more important* than vessel interaction and NOAA should be placing their greatest efforts in these areas.

Here are my suggestions for NOAA's orca management plan.

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Thank you for allowing me to contribute my input.

Martine Springer

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Subject: Orca Vessel Management Plan
From: Bright <mcb756@comcast.net>
Date: Fri, 08 Jan 2010 10:45:18 -0800
To: Orca.Plan@noaa.gov

NOAA:

We have lived in the North West for 25 years and frequent the San Juan Islands for sailing, kayaking and family leisure. The islands and native habitat are very dear to my family. We agree with Mr. Mark Lewis in his analysis and suggestions, as I have copied and attached below from his email already forwarded to the NOAA Vessel Management site. Although the NOAA suggested measures are well intended, they fall far short of what actually needs to be done to protect the Orca. In addition, the inclusion of human powered craft for restriction to the designated areas of the NOAA plan, we believe to be misplaced. Human powered craft should be allowed access to all waters in the NOAA designated areas. They pose no threat to the Orca population with adherence to the K.E.L.P. plan.

Please provide more effort in establishing guidelines for commercial fishing, salmon protection and reduction of environmental hazardous waste as they pertain to protection of the Orca environment. These efforts are of a much more critical nature and would ultimately benefit and support our Resident Orca population in the long run.

Thank you for your consideration.
Sincerely,
Ed Bright, Mary Clevenger-Bright

AS SUBMITTED BY MARK LEWIS:

Here are my suggestions for NOAA's orca management plan.

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Thank you for allowing me to contribute my input.

Mark Lewis

Subject: Orca / Vessel Management Comments

From: Birdguide <birdguide@hotmail.com>

Date: Tue, 05 Jan 2010 19:58:23 -0800

To: Orca.Plan@noaa.gov

I have been a resident of San Juan Island for the past 28 years. I am a frequent boater and use kayaks, sailboats, and motorized craft in my hobbies as birder, whale watcher, photographer, and scuba diver. Back in the 1980's I conducted censuses of marine bird species in the San Juan Islands for the Dept of Wildlife and Fish & Wildlife Service.

Back in the "old days" I watched commercial fisherman shoot at whales with rifles and throwing concussion grenades in the water at least once a month. Every summer day the whales would have to negotiate a maze of nets, sometimes hundreds of gill nets were amassed in the orcas primary feeding area on the west side. None of this deterred the whales in any way from using these waters.

I believe that your current focus on whale / vessel interactions is somewhat misplaced. Yes, some things need to change, hence my proposals below. However, the main concern for the orcas' continued survival should be: 1) restoring healthy salmon populations to Washington/Oregon and, 2) reducing bioaccumulated toxins in the environment such as PCB's. These issues are *overwhelmingly more important* than vessel interaction and NOAA should be placing their greatest efforts in these areas.

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from Edwards Point (located just south of Deadman Bay) around Lime Kiln Point and up to San Juan County Park to be in effect year-round. This "no-go zone for motors" would extend out to 1/2 mile offshore. This area would be a kayak and human-powered craft-only zone, all other restrictions applying. Absolutely no exemptions for recreational or commercial fishing.

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Thank you for allowing me to contribute my input.

Mark Lewis

Subject: San Juan Island-westside closure to boaters
From: David Drummond <apodidae1@gmail.com>
Date: Wed, 06 Jan 2010 12:49:49 -0800
To: Orca.Plan@noaa.gov

Dear Sir/Madam,

Happy New Year to you!

I have been in the area since 1965: living, boating and enjoying the wildlife of the San Juan Islands. As Mark Lewis points out, the measures you are proposing to implement do NOT address the real impacts to the Orca population. One can only hope, that after you read and consider his recommendations (which I concur with), that a more useful proposal will emerge that addresses the important issues and implements realistic closure areas.

Long live Orcas, muscle propelled boats and the Life Force!

Sincerely,

David Drummond

Sent: Tuesday, January 05, 2010 7:58 PM
Subject: Orca / Vessel Management Comments

I have been a resident of San Juan Island for the past 28 years. I am a frequent boater and use kayaks, sailboats, and motorized craft in my hobbies as birder, whale watcher, photographer, and scuba diver. Back in the 1980's I conducted censuses of marine bird species in the San Juan Islands for the Dept of Wildlife and Fish & Wildlife Service.

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Thank you for allowing me to contribute my input.

Mark Lewis

Subject: San Juan Island "no-boat" zone
From: Greg Koontz <gk@efour.net>
Date: Wed, 06 Jan 2010 09:25:59 -0800
To: Orca.Plan@noaa.gov

I have been kayaking off the west coast of San Juan Island (and throughout the archipelago) since 1987. In all those years, I have never seen an orca even directly acknowledge a kayak's presence. I have had J pod frolic with their new-born calves without 100 feet of my boat (and no, I did not paddle into their midst, I sat still and they traveled past me). They know we are there, but they simply ignore us, or go around us.

Motorized boats, especially those packed with tourists, are another matter. People have an urge to get closer and closer, inevitably leading many, many people to violate existing approach limits on a regular basis (I have seen this for years also). Both motorized and human-powered craft need to obey the laws, but while kayaks cannot move faster than an orca, motorized boats can – and unlike kayaks, they actively pollute the acoustic environment that is critical to the orcas.

A clean habitat and restored salmon runs are, I believe, more critical issues than interactions with boats; which is not to say that boats do not need to be regulated, only perhaps that NOAA should expend their resources in proportion to the gravity of the problem. Shutting down San Juan Island to human-powered craft will not improve the whales environment – because they do not interact with them in any meaningful way. In fact, we should encourage people to observe the whales (and all wildlife) in such a low impact manner, not shut them down by lumping all observers into a "one-size-fits-all" category of "nuisance boaters".

There are some sensible proposals floating around regarding the regulation of boating on the west side. The proposal below seem reasonable, and do not seem to impose undue hardships on any boat operator, motorized or human-powered. I'm all for protecting the orcas – I plan to keep kayaking with and around them as long as I can.

Thanks for your consideration:

1. I support your proposal to require that **MOTORIZED** vessels (human-powered craft exempt) stay 200 yards away from orcas.
2. I support your proposal that **MOTORIZED** vessels keep clear a 400 yard right-of-way ahead of the whale's path; human-powered craft should keep a 200 yard right-of-way ahead of the whales path. It should be recognized that human-powered craft have severely lowered and thereby reduced line-of-sight which often limits their ability to spot orcas. Also, their inherently slow speed combined with wind/current effects can make it more difficult to quickly clear the way compared to motorized vessels.
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 - C. Create an "no-go zone for motors" for motorized vessels (human-powered craft exempt) from Edwards Point

(located just south of Deadman Bay) around Lime Kiln Point and up to San Juan County Park to be in effect year-round. This "no-go zone for motors" would extend out to 1/2 mile offshore. This area would be a kayak and human-powered craft-only zone, all other restrictions applying. Absolutely no exemptions for recreational or commercial fishing.

D. Adopt the code of conduct / management / educational plan devised by SoundWatch / The Whale Museum for dealing with kayakers and human-powered craft that is referred to as K.E.L.P.

greg koontz

manager,

efour, PLLC

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Subject: San Juan Island Orca Proposal
From: Dan miller <dan.miller.j@gmail.com>
Date: Wed, 06 Jan 2010 18:04:21 -0800
To: Orca.Plan@noaa.gov

I have been an environmentalist and naturalist my entire life, as well as an outdoor recreation devotee and advocate. My love of nature has brought me through college, completing a natural resources degree, and led me to a position as a Kayak Guide and Naturalist in the San Juan Islands. I agree, we need to change and enforce policy to help the special group of whales in our waters, known as the Southern Resident Orcas, continue on as a community in such a way that they can flourish.

I attended several meetings that NOAA held on the subject, as well as discussed this topic with endless enthusiasts and laymen alike. The consensus shows that the community needs protecting, but that NOAA's proposed policies are somewhat misdirected. Changes need to happen, but there are other issues then vessel traffic that need more attention .

I have witnessed many times the Orcas gracefully navigating 20 or so purseiners among many other vessels without a hint of inconvenience. As you are aware, they are incredibly intelligent animals. NOAA should be focusing their resources on more pressing issue that threaten the Orcas such as food source, pollutants, and harassment by pleasure boaters (this would benefit greatly by allocation of funds to enforce laws already on the books) that create chemical pollutants as well as environmental noise pollution.

Non-motorized vessels provide thousands of people a year an intimate glimpse at these amazing creatures. In turn furnishing an amazing opportunity to educate people about the Orca as well the ecosystem as a whole. Education is by far the greatest ally that the Orcas have, by educating people they can make informed choices that will yield a better outcome for the Southern Resident Community. You will find my suggestions below.

Here are my suggestions for NOAA's orca management plan.

1. I support your proposal to require that MOTORIZED vessels (human-powered craft exempt) stay 200 yards away from orcas.
2. I support your proposal that MOTORIZED vessels keep clear a 400 yard right-of-way ahead of the whale's path; human-powered craft should keep a 200 yard right-of-away ahead of the whales path. It should be recognized that human-powered craft have severely lowered and thereby reduced line-of-sight which often limits their ability to spot orcas. Also, their inherently slow speed combined with wind/current effects can make it more difficult to quickly clear the way compared to motorized vessels.
3. I recommend that the orcas' critical foraging area on the west side of San Juan Island be considered a unique management area. I do not support your proposed blanket "no-go zone" as currently designed. Reductions in vessel-whale interactions can be achieved by giving right-of-way to the whales in this congested area. This unique area should be regulated in the following ways:
 - A. Create a large "slow zone". Make all vessels go slower than 7 knots in an area extending from Kellet Bluff to Cattle Point when within half-mile of shore throughout the year.
 - B. Create a "whale right-of-way zone" for MOTORIZED vessels (human-powered craft exempt) when whales are present between May 1 and Sept 30 extending from Battleship Island to Eagle Point. Vessels should be required to move off shore by 1/4 mile (440 yards) when whales are present within 1/4 mile (440 yards) of a vessel and when the vessel and whales are within 1/4 mile (440 yards) from

shore.

C. Create an "no-go zone for motors" for MOTORIZED vessels (human-powered craft exempt) from Edwards Point (located just south of Deadman Bay) around Lime Kiln Point and up to San Juan County Park to be in effect year-round. This "no-go zone for motors" would extend out to 1/2 mile offshore. This area would be a kayak and human-powered craft-only zone, all other restrictions applying. Absolutely no exemptions for recreational or commercial fishing.

D. SoundWatch / The Whale Museum has devised an excellent code of conduct / management / educational plan for dealing with kayakers and human-powered craft that is referred to as K.E.L.P. This should be supported and continued.

Thank you for allowing me to contribute my input.

Daniel Miller

Subject: Plans to restrict boating traffic near Orca whales near San Juan Island

From: Jeff Carter <carterlundberg@yahoo.com>

Date: Thu, 07 Jan 2010 15:02:02 -0800 (PST)

To: Orca.Plan@noaa.gov

As an avid kayaker and kayak guide for the past 10 years, I am grateful for the NOAA's attempt to restrict boating traffic near Orca whales. I have seen far too many recreational boats, fishing boats and whale watch boats block their path, hover too close to them and/or chase them as the whales attempted to stay on their path. I believe that the guidelines are too restrictive, however, regarding non-motorized vessels (like sea kayaks). I have had numerous close encounters with the whales not necessarily because I was in their way but because they came to me voluntarily. With no motor (thus minimal noise), a small "footprint" on the water and the inability to chase whales as they swim (in most cases), I believe that kayaks pose very little threat to the Orcas. I would like to see the research that proves otherwise. I also feel that encounters with whales (even from a distance) in kayaks can be very inspiring and prompt those who experience that thrill to help protect them. However, I do think that flotillas of kayaks, placed in their path intentionally, can disturb the whales and I applaud Sound Watch's approach to monitor such behavior.

I would suggest that if there are any restrictions on kayakers between Edward Point and the San Juan County park (where the whales tend to be closest to shore) there should be a limit on the kayakers who are permitted to be in that zone (just like wilderness permits, fishing permits, etc.). These permits could be issued at any fishing shop, store, etc. (with perhaps a small fee required) and each person who gets one would have to agree to "whale friendly" behavior and display it while kayaking. There are examples of this in places such as the national park off Loreto, Baja, Mexico, where kayakers are required to have permits to camp and bring out all of their human waste.

Besides my suggestion above, I support Mark Lewis' plan laid out below. (Mark is a long-time kayaker and resident of San Juan island).

Here are my suggestions for NOAA's orca management plan.

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2. I support your proposal that **MOTORIZED** vessels keep clear a 400 yard right-of-way ahead of the whale's path; human-powered craft should keep a 200 yard right-of-way ahead of the whales path. It should be recognized that human-powered craft have severely lowered and thereby reduced line-of-sight which often limits their ability to spot orcas. Also, their inherently slow speed combined with wind/current effects can make it more difficult to quickly clear the way compared to motorized vessels.
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D. SoundWatch / The Whale Museum has devised an excellent code of conduct / management / educational plan for dealing with kayakers and human-powered craft that is referred to as K.E.L.P. This should be supported and continued.

Jeff Carter
Cell Phone: (206) 450-2592
Flickr photos: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/25444153@N02/>

Subject: Orca Management Plan
From: Don Kurilec <donkurilec@mac.com>
Date: Wed, 06 Jan 2010 12:27:06 +0000
To: Orca.Plan@noaa.gov

To whom it may concern:

I was recently informed of NOAA's plan to prohibit boats on the West Side of San Juan Island. As a naturalist and frequent visitor to the San Juan Islands, I think it is unnecessary to prohibit human-powered craft. I have kayaked in orca waters and have always been conscious of my duties and responsibilities to make sure I do not disrupt any wildlife. I've witnessed many other kayakers do the same, even in large groups. I just don't understand how human-powered crafts pose the same threats as Motorized vessels. A friend of mine had informed me of his suggestions for an orca management plan, and I agree with his thoughts and attached them below. Please consider these suggestions so others as myself can enjoy and respect the special connection San Juan Island and it's wildlife has to offer.

Sincerely,

Don Kurilec

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