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# Reducing Vessel Impacts on Killer Whales

NOAA Fisheries West Coast Region  
Protected Resources Division

# Introduction

-A public comment period is open for scoping on ways to reduce vessel impacts on killer whales.

-Comments are due by December 23, 2019.

-Submit comments:

**Written:** fill out and submit a comment sheet tonight

**Oral:** sign-up to speak tonight

**Mail:** See ADDRESSES section of the FR Notice

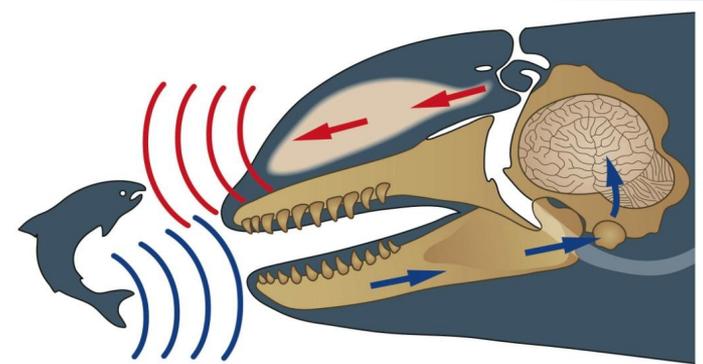
**Electronic:** Send comments to



# Vessel Impacts

Vessel impacts on SRKW are well-studied.

- Killer whales use echolocation to find food, communicate, and navigate. Vessel noise can mask echolocation calls.
- Killer whales amplify their calls in the presence of vessels
- Increase in surface active behaviors in presence of vessels
- Vessel strike is also a risk to killer whales.



# Vessel Regulations

Three sets of regulations exist for killer whales in the Salish Sea:

- Canadian Federal-Updated 2019
- Washington State-Updated 2019
- U.S. Federal-Implemented 2011



Measure	WA State 2019 <b>(SRKW only)</b>	Canada 2019 <b>(all killer whales with one exception)</b>	Current U.S. Federal 2011 <b>(all killer whales)</b>
Distance Limit	300 yards laterally, 400 yards in front of and behind the whales	400 meters (437 yards) in all directions	200 yards around the whales, 400 yards in the path
Speed Limit	7 knots within ½ nautical mile	Voluntary 7 knots within ½ nautical mile	None
Protected Area	Voluntary no-go zone	3 small closed Interim Sanctuary Zones for 2019	Voluntary no-go zone
Other	Place engine in neutral when within the approach limit	Place engine in neutral when within the approach limit	None

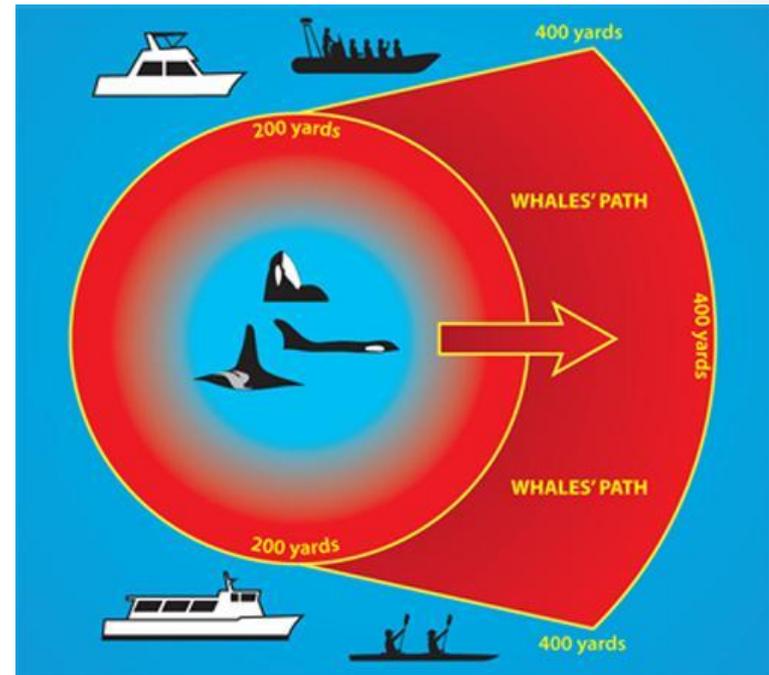


# Current Regulations

## Washington State and Canadian Regulations

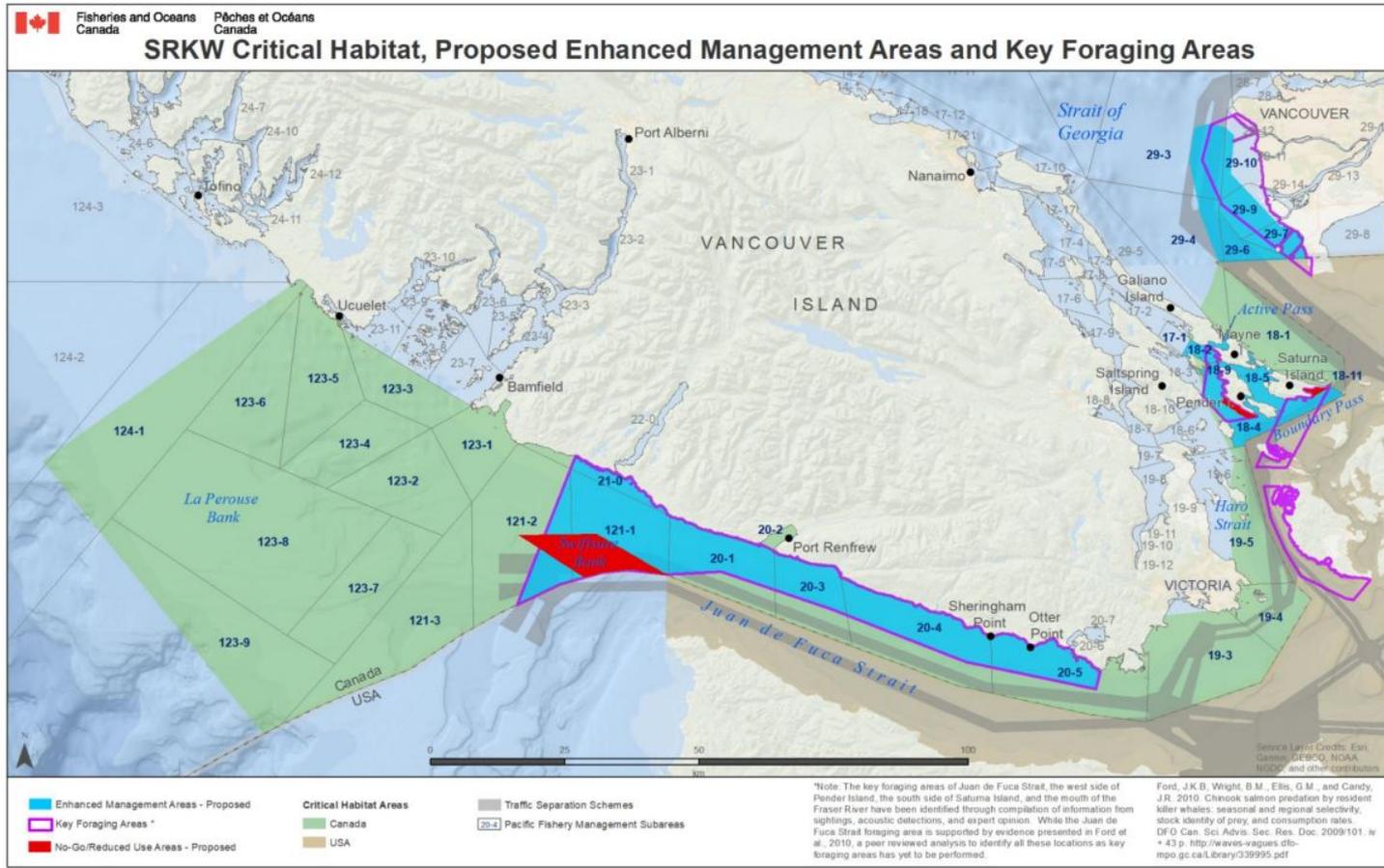


## U.S. Federal Regulations



# Canadian Regulations

## Interim Sanctuary Zones

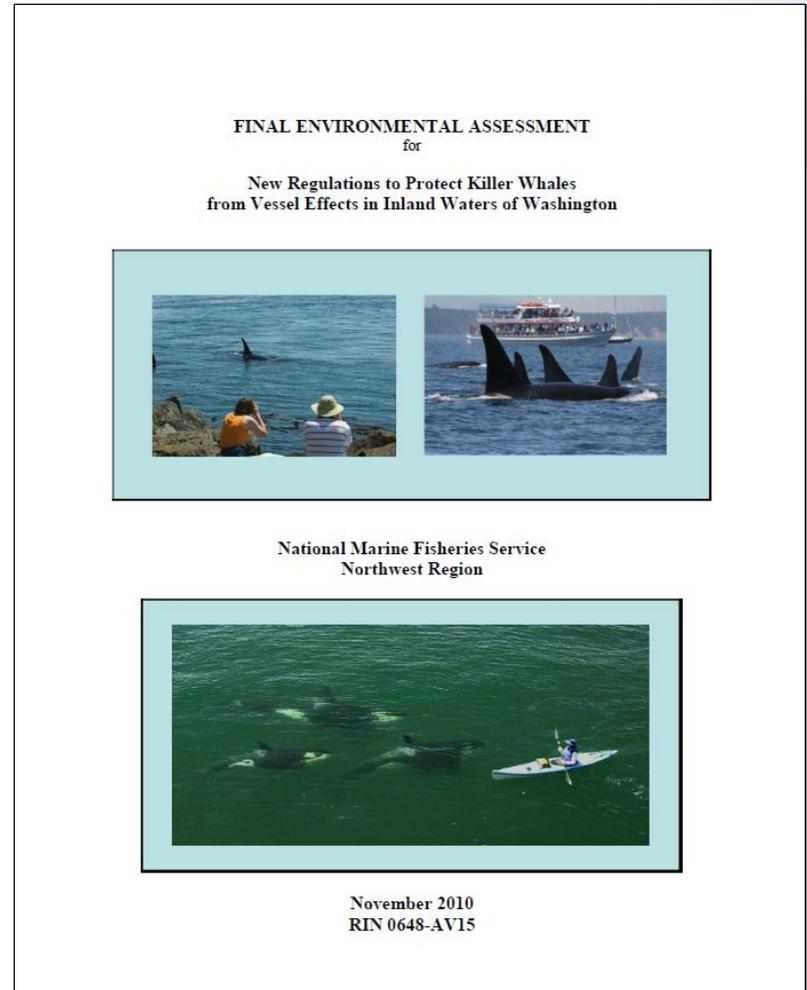


# Alternatives Considered in 2010

- 200-yard approach limit\*
- Prohibition on parking in the path within 400 yards\*
- 100-yard approach limit
- Speed limit within 400 yards
- No-go zone on the west side of SJI

Considered but not analyzed in detail:

- Moratorium on whale watching
- Rerouting ships
- Quota system or permit program
- Time of day restrictions
- Established routes to fishing areas
- Noise level standards
- Coastal regulations
- Codify all BWW guidelines
- Speed limit zone
- Aircraft approach regulations



# Evaluating the Federal Regulations

NMFS conducted a formal evaluation of the effectiveness of the regulations in 2017 using data from 2006-2015.

The evaluation looked at:

- Education & Outreach
- Enforcement
- Compliance
- Biological Effectiveness
- Economic Impacts

**Reducing Disturbance from Vessels  
to Southern Resident Killer Whales:  
Assessing the Effectiveness of the  
2011 Federal Regulations in Advancing  
Recovery Goals**

Grace A. Ferrara, Teresa M. Mongillo, and Lynne M. Barre



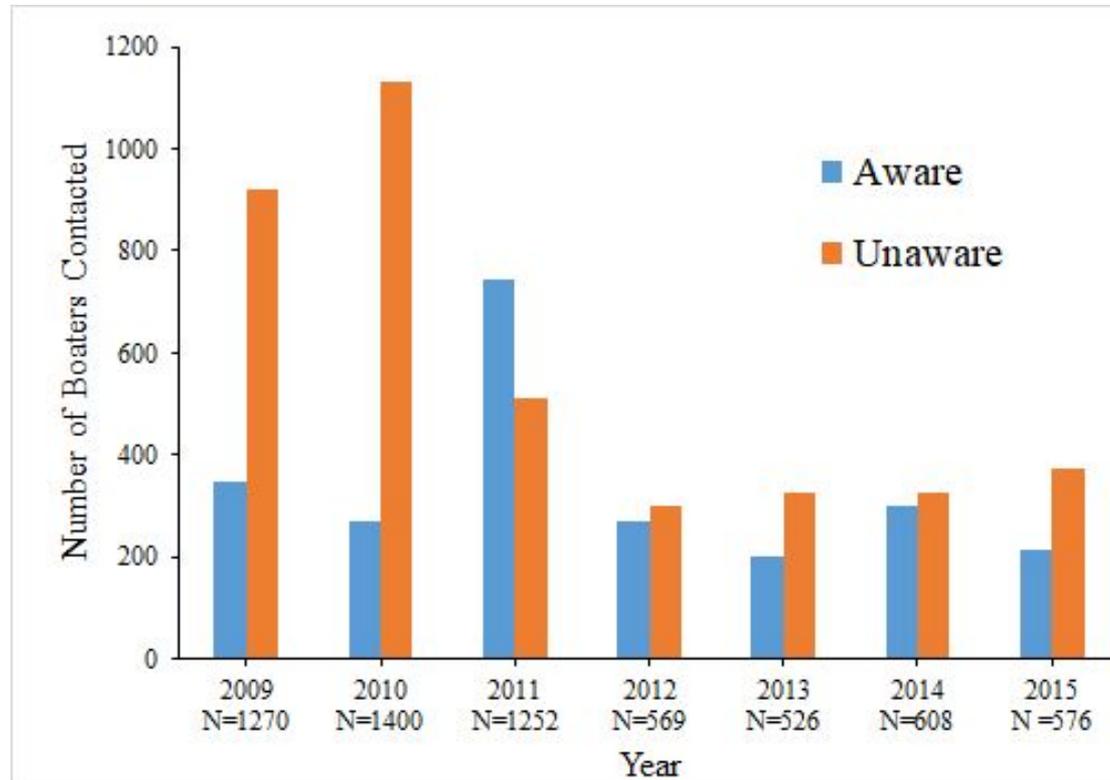
U.S. Department of Commerce  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
National Marine Fisheries Service

NOAA Technical Memorandum NMFSOPR-58  
December 2017



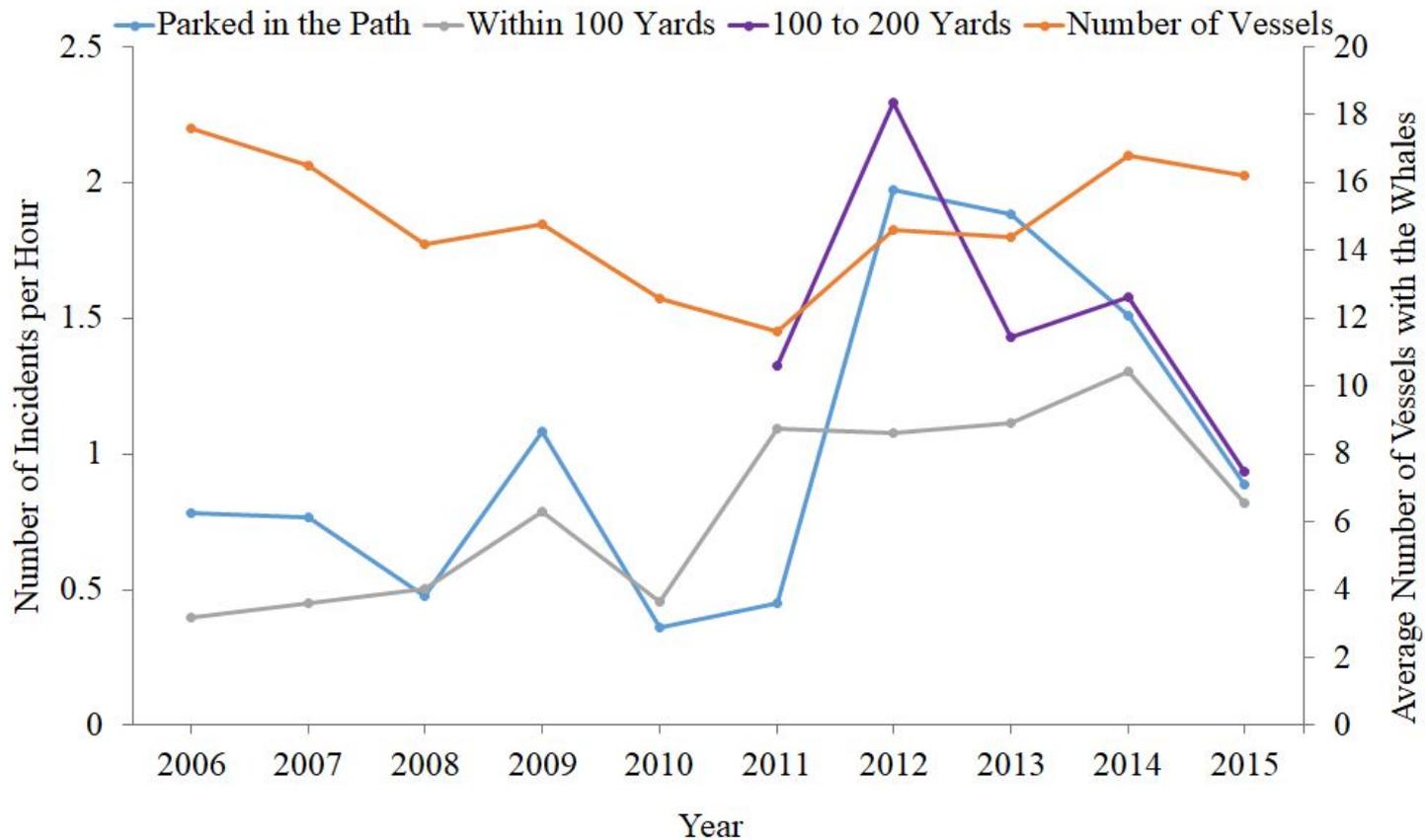
# Awareness & Compliance

## Trends Over Time



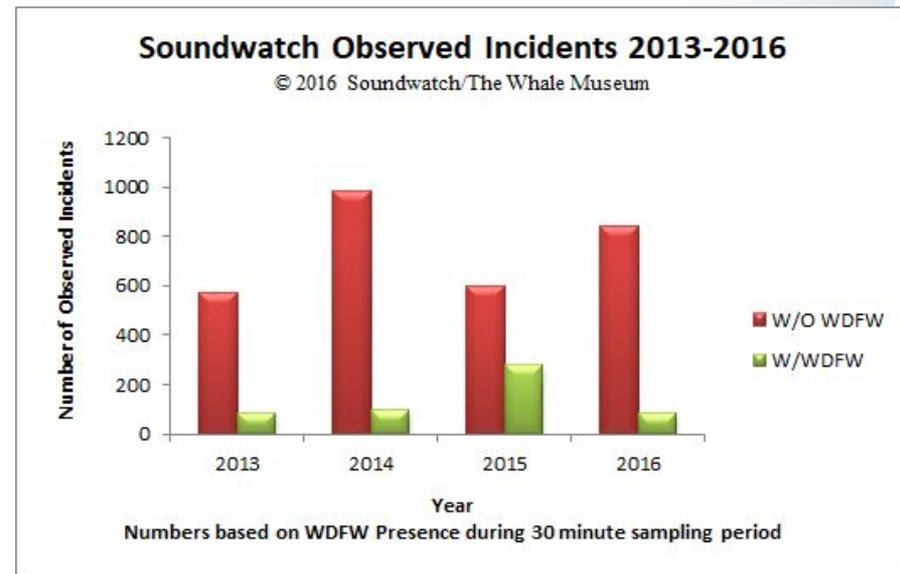
# Awareness & Compliance

## Trends Over Time



# Other Findings

- Compliance was higher in the presence of enforcement vessels
- Received noise levels did not decrease as expected
- No discernable negative economic impacts to the whale watch industry



# Big Picture Conclusions

Conditions are better for the whales post-regulations.

- More compliance with enforcement present
- More recreational boaters are aware of the regs than they were of the voluntary guidelines

There is still room for improvement.



# Preliminary Scoping

1. Should NMFS change the federal regulations?
2. If so, what management alternatives should we consider?
3. Do you have any relevant scientific or commercial information we should consider?
4. Can you think of any potential economic impacts of potential management alternatives?
5. Is there any additional information you would like us to consider?



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