

Orca Regulations Communications Advisory (ORCA) Group Meeting 3 Summary

Photo courtesy of NOAA

Meeting Details

Date: Monday, June 10, 2024
Time: 9:00am – 12:00 PM, PST
Location: Zoom Webinar
Link to Agenda [Link to Agenda](#)

Follow-up Action Items

- Ross Strategic to share the instructions and additional information for the FY25 funding objectives Mural exercise.
- If ORCA Group members have additional questions for C+C on their research, please send these to the Ross team.

Summary of Meeting Topics and High-level Discussion Points

Welcome, Introductions and Public Comment

Shelby Thomas (Ross Strategic) opened the meeting and welcomed the Orca Regulations Communications Advisory (ORCA) Group Members and the members of the public that registered to observe to the third meeting. ORCA Group Members each provided brief introductions and then Shelby invited the public observers to provide public comment. One member of the public provided public comment, noting that they have been hearing radio advertisements about the upcoming Southern Resident Killer Whale (SRKW) viewing regulations and that they appreciate the outreach to the public that the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) has initiated on this topic.

Overview of ORCA Group Process

Shelby then provided a reminder of the ORCA Group's process, noting the timing of the two Boater Engagement Workshops—one at the end of June and the second in at the end of the summer. A timeline of the ORCA Group process and the desired outcomes for upcoming ORCA Group Meetings can be found on slides 8 and 9 of the Meeting Presentation.

Working Group Updates

Shelby then shared a recap of the activities that the Recreation Boater Working Group, a sub-group of ORCA Group Members with specific recreational boating expertise, that had taken place since the last ORCA Group Meeting. She introduced a [presentation](#) that the Working Group developed to provide the ORCA Group with information and statistics on recreational boaters in Washington. George Harris (RBAW) presented the slides to the ORCA Group and after his presentation there was a discussion on its content, highlights of this discussion are as follows:

- It was asked if the registered boat numbers on slides 5 and 6 included commercial vessels.
 - It is unclear if the registered boat numbers from the Department of Licensing (DoL) include all commercial vessels, but all fishing charters are included within these figures.

- An ORCA Group member asked if vessels that are owned by rental boat companies are included within the registered vessel numbers. Noting that with the trends in the registered vessel numbers in recent years could be attributed to individuals opting to rent recreational vessels or joining a boat club that share vessels among members, as opposed to purchasing their own vessel.
 - All vessels that owned by rental boat companies need to be registered annually by the company and are included within the figures. It was noted that these vessels are often used at a higher rate during boating season compared to individually owned vessels.
- Multiple members raised and shared anecdotes that the members of boat clubs are often younger than individual vessel owners. Highlighting the need to develop outreach strategies that align with this demographic, in addition to individual vessel owners.
- Sailing schools were identified as potential outreach opportunities to reach a different demographic of recreational boater that would need tailored on-water instructions for complying with the new regulations.
- Multiple members shared that it would be good to focus outreach efforts to recreational boaters during peak boating days, like Sea Fair, sport fishing openers, crabbing or shrimping season openers, and holidays.
 - The development of a calendar of these dates was recommended by the ORCA Group to help WDFW focus their outreach efforts.
 - WDFW attendees noted that their office is in close contact with their WDFW colleagues that set sport fishing seasons and can work with them directly on relevant ORCA Group outreach.
- One ORCA Group member noted that outreach to national sailing clubs can be difficult because, while these organizations do require their member to complete trainings in order to operate their vessels. Sailing club Members often only need to complete these trainings once initially upon joining and the trainings can take place at any of their locations across the country and may not include information on regional regulations like the Salish Sea SRKW viewing regulations.
- Creel reports and inspections done by WDFW officials were raised as potential touch points with sport fishers that could be utilized to help inform this demographic of the new SRKW viewing regulations.
- Members of the Recreational Boater Working Group noted that the main concern that they are hearing from fellow recreational boaters is compliance with the new regulations during poor boating conditions.
- An ORCA Group member raised that it would be beneficial to develop a standardized presentation on the new SRKW viewing regulations that would be presented to Yacht Clubs so that a consistent message is being shared with this demographic.
- It was raised that the new SRKW viewing regulations should be shared with boat race event coordinators so that they can be included within the race rules that competitors are required to read prior to races.
- Multiple ORCA Group members shared that a SRKW viewing regulations ambassador program at Boat and Yacht Clubs would be beneficial for streamlining the delivery of information on the new SRKW viewing regulations to these groups. These ambassadors would be in charge of being

up to date on the recreational boating regulations, as well as communicating these to their membership and could provide a direct line of communication to this demographic.

- Centralized coordination on materials and outreach strategies was stressed by multiple members to ensure that messaging is consistent across all parties to reduce confusion by having conflicting messages or information being shared with boaters.
- An ORCA Group member noted that the new Be Whale Wise coordinator Maria Sabando Plaza was present at as a public viewer of the ORCA Group Meeting and invited them to provide their thoughts to the group.
 - Maria shared that they appreciated the information that was provided to the ORCA Group during the meeting and that they could assist in the coordination of an ambassador program.

C+C Social Marketing Research Presentation

Alex Knepler, Rachel Strott, and Kathleen Dommer (C+C) presented their initial social marketing research findings to the ORCA Group. Their social marketing research is aimed at better understanding the opinions of recreational boaters and commercial vessel operators in Salish Sea waterways to inform the development of a social marketing campaign. C+C's study collected data via a 30-minute online survey that was shared with individuals in the commercial whale watching industry and commercial fishers. At the time of the ORCA Group meeting 24 individuals had responded to the survey and the initial findings can be found on slides 21 – 30 of the meeting presentation. After C+C's presentation they answered questions from the ORCA Group members, highlights of this discussion are as follows:

- Multiple ORCA Group members volunteered to reach out to their contacts within the commercial whale watching industry and commercial fisheries to increase participation in C+C's study. C+C shared that additional input would be helpful to better understand their priority audiences and that an additional 20 responses would be ideal.

Working Group Updates (cont.)

Susan Hayman (Ross Strategic) proposed to the ORCA Group the formation of a Land-based Whale Watching Working Group that would consist of ORCA Group members with particular expertise and/or who represent a constituency of land-based SRKW (and other Orca) viewers. This group would propose communication objectives, messages, and methods for the land-based viewer audience for consideration by the full ORCA Group. After Susan provided an overview of the proposed Working Group, ORCA Group members discussed and voted against the formation of the Working Group. ORCA Group members generally want to keep the focus of their work on communications with boaters, and generally agreed that potential messaging and methods specifically for land-based whale watchers could be incorporated as needed without the creation of another working group.

Additional discussion related to public reporting of potential violations emerged in the discussion of a potential land-based working group. Highlights of this discussion are as follows:

- It was asked if a member of the public calls WDFW dispatch on a potential violation, what the obligation of dispatch would be in that situation.
 - Dispatch will relay potential violation information to enforcement officers that are in the field to assist in the situation, but sightings can be sporadic, and these individuals may not be in close enough proximity to respond to each report. Like with other reports to

law enforcement, the more precise the information provided to dispatch the more effective these individuals can be.

- WDFW shared that they are in collaboration with commercial whale watchers on providing enforcement officers with boat information of vessels violating whale watching regulations.

FY25 Preliminary Communication Objectives and Messages

Susan then provided the ORCA Group with an overview and instructions of how to complete the Mural exercise on preliminary communications objectives and messages for FY25 investment priorities. Multiple ORCA Group members raised that they think it would be valuable to have a collaborative working session as an ORCA Group for the Mural exercise to draw on the collective expertise of the group. The facilitation team will pursue this approach for the August meeting (Meeting 4), while still looking for opportunities to do some prework to help inform and streamline this conversation.

Recreational Boaters Workshops

Shelby provided an overview of and shared the agenda for the first Recreation Boaters Workshop that is scheduled to take place on June 20th. She then shared potential focus group topics and questions for the Focus Group portion of the Workshop to gather feedback from the ORCA Group. Highlights of this discussion are as follows:

- ORCA Group members shared that it would be good to survey recreational boaters on their current understanding of orca whale ecotypes and behaviors to inform the need for more communications on these topics.
- An ORCA Group member raised that it could be beneficial to share the idea of the SRKW regulations ambassador program to gauge interest in the potential program.
- It would be informative to understand what technologies or communications channels recreational boaters are using to identify the locations of SRKW within the Salish Sea.
- Multiple ORCA Group Members agreed that it would be beneficial to share the current proposed communications approaches within the FY25 funding table at the Workshops to get participants' feedback on the already proposed approaches and gather new information.
- Gathering recreational boater sentiment on their current feelings about WDFW enforcement and ticketing approaches was shared as a potential method to determine baseline sentiment towards this group prior to the new regulations taking effect.

Meeting Attendees

Name	Organization	Attendance
Web Hutchins	NA	---
George Harris	Northwest Marine Trade Association	X
Erin Gless	Pacific Whale Watch Association	X
John Boyd	Western Prince	---
April Rebollo	NA	X
David Willis	Recreation Boaters Association of Washington	X
Donna Sandstrom	The Whale Trail	X
Justine Asohmbom	Washington State Department of Ecology	X
Chairman Thomas Wooten	Samish Indian Nation	X
Tisa Annette	Puget Sound Orcas	X
Stephanie Raymond	Orca Network	X
David Bain	The Orca Conservancy	X
Frances Robertson	San Juan County	X
Nate Pamplin	Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife	---
Julie Watson	Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife	X
Aaron Provencio	Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife	X
Ben Anderson	Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife	X
Shelby Thomas	Ross Strategic	X
Susan Hayman	Ross Strategic	X
Alec Ege	Ross Strategic	X

April Rebollo
 David Bain
 Donna Sandstrom
 Erin Gless

Frances Robertson
 John Boyd
 Justine Asohmbom
 George Harris

Stephanie Raymond
 Tisa Annette
 Tom Wooten

Project Team Members:

Aaron Provencio, WDFW
 Alec Ege, Ross Strategic
 Ben Anderson, WDFW
 Julie Watson, WDFW

Nate Pamplin, WDFW
 Shelby Thomas, Ross
 Strategic

Susan Hayman, Ross
 Strategic

Members of the Public:

Rein Attemann
 Tara Galuska
 Maria Auxiliadora Sabando
 Plaza