

## **WDFW Gets \$925,000 NOAA Grant to Help Protect Killer Whales**

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife will expand its involvement in the crucial task of protecting Puget Sound's killer whale population, thanks to a \$925,000 grant from NOAA's Fisheries Service.

Southern Resident killer whales, which visit Puget Sound every year during the summer and fall, have been listed as endangered under the federal Endangered Species Act since 2005 and their population has hovered in the mid 80s for the past several years. NOAA scientists say the animals can be affected by the Sound's commercial and recreational boat traffic, especially in the summer, and by whale watching, whether from commercial whale-watching vessels or private recreational boats.

The state will use the money to hire an enforcement officer for a three-year term. The Fisheries Service said that officer will provide education and enforcement on the water. The new officer will investigate serious violations of the laws protecting the Sound's killer whales, work with community groups and other federal and Canadian enforcement agencies and devote an anticipated 500 hours a year to marine patrols each summer.

The fish and wildlife department is also expected to subcontract with the region's Whale Museum's Soundwatch education program to augment its own education and outreach work with Puget Sound's boaters.

For a complete list of today's NOAA grants to support species recovery nationwide, go here: [http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/mediacenter/2013/08/01\\_08\\_grants.html](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/mediacenter/2013/08/01_08_grants.html)

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