



Killer Whale Conservation Program

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FUNDING PARTNERS

- U.S. Navy
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
- BNSF Railway
- SeaWorld Entertainment

ABOUT NFWF

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) works with partners to foster sustainable and impactful conservation solutions so that people and nature thrive together. Chartered by Congress in 1984, NFWF has grown to become the nation's largest conservation foundation. Since its founding, NFWF has funded more than 23,300 projects that have generated a total conservation impact of \$11.3 billion.

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Killer whale

OVERVIEW

Killer whales are a defining feature of the ecological and cultural fabric of Pacific Northwest communities. The Southern Resident population of killer whales in the Salish Sea are the only known resident population in the United States. This population declined sharply in the early 1970s, and even with more than two decades of increased protection, the population stands at less than 80 individuals and has shown few signs of recovery.

The Killer Whale Conservation Program was established in 2015 to support efforts to advance understanding and conservation of the Southern Resident killer whale population in the Pacific Northwest. This objective is supported by increasing prey availability through restoring salmon runs, improving water quality and reducing disturbance in their habitat, and filling critical research gaps in the health, demographics and stressors of this population.

In 2025, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), U.S. Navy, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, BNSF Railway, and SeaWorld Entertainment announced 10 new grant awards totaling more than \$2.3 million. The 10 awards announced will generate more than \$1.7 million in matching contributions from the grantees, providing a total conservation impact of more than \$4 million.

NFWF takes a full life-cycle approach to increasing the Southern Resident population's priority prey, Chinook salmon, by restoring key freshwater and nearshore habitats for juvenile and adult salmon and the forage fish that they rely on for food. This year's slate will not only support longer-term habitat restoration projects both big and small, but also mid-term strategies to reduce disturbances from small and large vessels to increase killer whales' success in capturing salmon.

(continued)



Chinook salmon swimming upstream

2025 GRANTS

Demonstrate Benefits of Enhanced Soil Health and Runoff Reduction to Skagit Farmers (WA)

Grantee: Skagit Conservation District
 Grant Amount:\$313,800
 Matching Funds: \$78,500
 Total Project Amount:\$392,300
 Encourage farmers and landowners to adopt practices that improve water quality by reducing sediment runoff, ultimately benefiting vulnerable habitats critical for Chinook salmon. Project will train and empower agricultural communities in Skagit and Samish nearshore lands to enhance their soil health and responsibly manage runoff by demonstrating the benefits of soil management practices with use of a rainfall simulator.

Engaging Foresters in Chinook Conservation Opportunities in the Snohomish and Puyallup Watersheds (WA)

Grantee: Washington Department of Natural Resources
 Grant Amount:\$496,000
 Matching Funds:\$440,000
 Total Project Amount:\$936,000
 Conduct a suite of projects to improve Chinook salmon habitat on small forest landowner riparian parcels in the Puget Sound's Snohomish and Puyallup watersheds. Project will restore riparian habitat conditions by controlling invasive vegetation and installing native plants, promoting water quality through landowner outreach and technical assistance to support beaver coexistence, and supporting regional fish passage barrier

identification and prioritization efforts by filling important data gaps.

Establish Community Teams to Foster Establishment of Recently Restored Nearshore Habitat (WA)

Grantee: Northwest Straits Marine Conservation Foundation
 Grant Amount: \$99,500
 Matching Funds:\$166,700
 Total Project Amount:\$266,200
 Restore shoreline habitat to benefit forage fish such as sand lance, herring and surf smelt. Project will recruit, train and work with community volunteers and seasonal field technicians to ensure native shoreline vegetation and natural shoreline processes are re-established at four sites in priority forage fish habitats.

Helping Landowners Maintain Recently Restored Chinook Habitat in the Nooksack River (WA)

Grantee: Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association
 Grant Amount: \$76,300
 Matching Funds: \$56,400
 Total Project Amount:\$132,700
 Maintain 12 acres of streamside habitat in the Nooksack River Basin by engaging 300 volunteers to dedicate more than 1,400 hours to 13 sites. Project will provide maintenance to aging restoration sites where trees have outgrown their predation protection devices and for other ongoing maintenance activities

like invasive species removal which is necessary to restore full ecosystem function.

Improve Water Quality for Chinook Through Creosote Removal at Fir Island in the Skagit River (WA)

Grantee: Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group

Grant Amount: \$75,000

Matching Funds: \$0

Total Project Amount: \$75,000

Remove 17 derelict creosote pilings from sensitive estuary habitat in the Skagit River Delta and restore native riparian habitat along 500 linear feet of riverbank. Project will increase survival of all fish in this estuary habitat, including Chinook salmon, a crucial food source for the Southern Resident killer whale population.

Mapping Priority Nursery Habitat for Larval Forage Fishes in the Whidbey Basin (WA)

Grantee: The Tulalip Tribes of Washington

Grant Amount: \$64,000

Matching Funds: \$0

Total Project Amount: \$64,000

Identify and map important areas used as rearing and nurse habitat for larval forage fishes such as sand lance and herring throughout the Whidbey Basin to prioritize conservation and restoration actions. Project will disseminate results within active working groups such as the Puget Sound Ecosystem Monitoring Program's Forage Fish and Food Webs Work Group.

Neck Point Beach Habitat Restoration for Forage Fish and Salmon in the San Juan Islands (WA)

Grantee: Friends of the San Juans

Grant Amount: \$135,000

Matching Funds: \$170,000

Total Project Amount: \$305,000

Improve forage fish and juvenile salmon migration habitat by removing armor, nourishing the beach and planting shoreline vegetation at a pocket beach on Shaw Island. Project will restore 500 feet of marine shoreline and unbury more than 6,000 square feet of intertidal beach at a documented forage fish spawning site.

Provide Nighttime Whale Detections and Measure Vessel Noise with a Long-Term Hydrophone (WA)

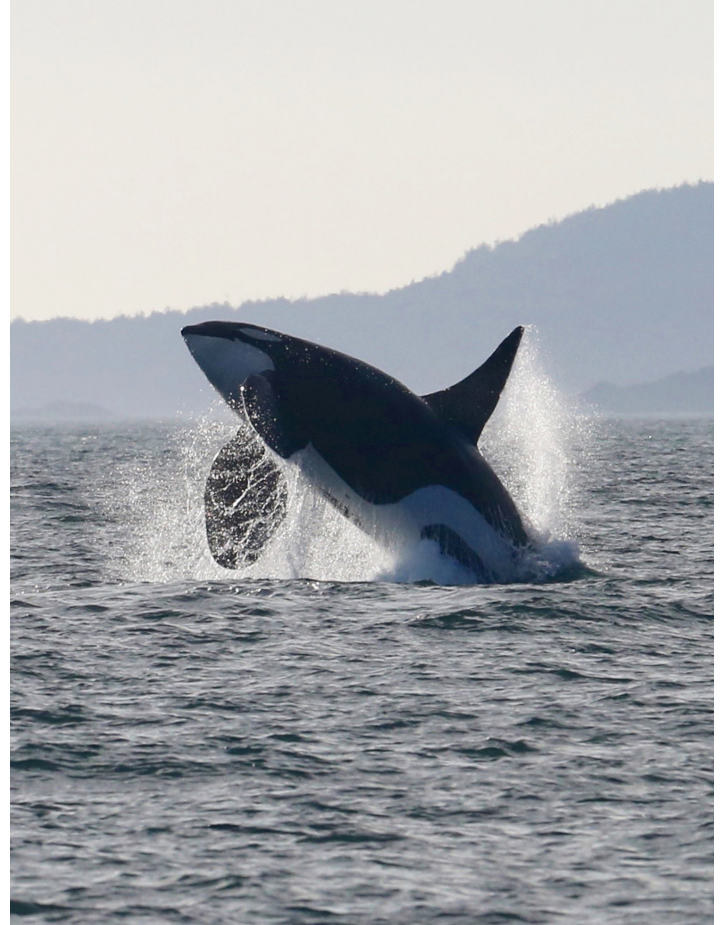
Grantee: Washington Maritime Blue

Grant Amount: \$110,100

Matching Funds: \$0

Total Project Amount: \$110,100

Deploy a hydrophone array to address the current gap in Southern Resident killer whale detection during low-visibility conditions. Project will provide more accurate real-time alerts to mariners, monitor killer whale presence, and collect valuable data on whale habitat and maritime activities.



Southern Resident killer whale

Soundwatch Program Capacity Building to Increase Boater Compliance in Puget Sound (WA)

Grantee: The Whale Museum

Grant Amount: \$230,000

Matching Funds: \$75,400

Total Project Amount: \$305,400

Increase awareness and compliance of recreational boaters with vessel regulations around whales through on-water and land-based assessment and outreach. Project will improve Southern Resident killer whale habitat quality by reducing threats from vessel traffic and noise.

South Fork Nooksack River Cavanaugh Phase II Salmon Habitat Restoration (WA)

Grantee: Lummi Indian Business Council

Grant Amount: \$747,900

Matching Funds: \$747,900

Total Project Amount: \$1,495,800

Restore 0.5 miles of salmonid spawning, rearing and holding habitat on the South Fork Nooksack River to recover self-sustaining Chinook salmon runs to harvestable levels and increase prey availability for the endangered Southern Resident killer whale. Project will address habitat limiting factors in a priority reach by constructing 14 engineered log jams and four habitat structures and planting 7.3 riparian acres of vegetation.