



## Legislation Text

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**File #:** 2021-0464, **Version:** 1

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Clerk 12/06/2021

A MOTION supporting the Orca Protection Plan, the Quiet Sound Program and other efforts to protect the southern resident orca population, and requesting the King County executive to deploy the SoundGuardian, King County's research vessel, to coordinate with placing a hydrophone, in Puget Sound as part of the Port of Seattle's Quiet Sound Program to protect the southern resident orca population.

WHEREAS, according to the Marine Mammal Commission, an independent agency of the United States government, the total abundance for the southern resident orca, also known as killer whale, population was revised in September 2020 and now stands at only seventy-four whales, down from a peak of nearly one hundred whales during the 1990s, and

WHEREAS, the Marine Mammal Commission indicates that the ongoing decline of the southern resident orca population is most likely due to decreased quantity and quality of prey, the presence of persistent organic pollutants and disturbance from vessel presence and noise, and

WHEREAS, in 2018, Governor Inslee created the Southern Resident Killer Whale Task Force to assist the state in identifying, prioritizing and supporting the implementation of an action plan for the recovery of southern resident orcas, and

WHEREAS, in 2019, the Northwest Seaport Alliance, the cargo-operating partnership of the ports of Tacoma and Seattle, in collaboration with Washington State Ferries, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and Puget Sound Partnership developed an Orca Protection Plan to identify ways to protect the

endangered southern resident orca population, and

WHEREAS, as part of that effort, the Port of Seattle launched the Quiet Sound Program, an initiative to reduce underwater noise from ferries and commercial vessels calling on Puget Sound ports, and

WHEREAS, the Quiet Sound Program is supported by the Port of Seattle, the Northwest Seaport Alliance, the United States Coast Guard, Washington Maritime Blue, the Pacific Merchant Shipping Association, Marine Exchange of Puget Sound, Washington State Ferries, Puget Sound Partnership, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the Makah Tribe, and

WHEREAS, the success of the Quiet Sound Program depends on the ability to locate southern resident orcas in Puget Sound and communicate that information to Puget Sound pilots, ferry and tugboat captains, the Coast Guard and Marine Exchange so that vessels can change their courses or mitigate their underwater noises, and

WHEREAS, to aid in locating southern resident orcas, the Port of Seattle has the opportunity to install an underwater microphone, known as a hydrophone, in Puget Sound in preparation for the return of the southern resident orca population this fall and winter, and

WHEREAS, SoundGuardian, King County's research vessel, is used to monitor water quality in Puget Sound, Lake Washington, Lake Sammamish, the Duwamish river and other water bodies, and

WHEREAS, the Quiet Sound Program has requested that SoundGuardian be deployed in coordination with Sea Mammal Research Unit Consulting to deploy a buoy equipped with a hydrophone offshore of 145th Street Northwest in support of the Quiet Sound Program;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT MOVED by the Council of King County:

A. The council expresses its support for the Orca Protection Plan, the Quiet Sound Program and other efforts to protect the southern resident orca population.

B. The council requests that the King County executive deploy the SoundGuardian, King County's research vessel, to coordinate with Sea Mammal Research Unit Consulting to deploy a buoy equipped with a

hydrophone offshore of

145th Street Northwest in support of the Quiet Sound Program to protect the southern resident orca population.