

Prince of Whales to Invest \$1 Million in Orca Conservation

Company leads whale watching industry with salmon enhancement efforts

VICTORIA – Prince of Whales Whale Watching is enhancing salmon recovery projects, supporting marine conservation and investing in scientific research as part of a \$1-million multiyear investment strategy aimed at supporting the southern resident killer whale population.

The strategy includes an increase in the Conservation Fee charged to passengers which, effective today, rises to \$5 from \$2. That is expected to generate more than \$1 million over the next five years, with every dollar going toward orca-based science programs and Chinook salmon recovery projects in British Columbia.

“The southern resident orca population is struggling and one of the big reasons is the reduced availability of prey,” said Alan McGillivray, owner of Prince of Whales. “By increasing Chinook salmon, their primary food source, we can help reverse this trend.”

In recent years, Prince of Whales has donated more than \$150,000 in passenger surcharges to local marine conservation initiatives, scientific research projects and academic sponsorship of PhD-level scientists. That included \$50,000 donated to the Pacific Salmon Foundation’s Salish Sea Marine Survival Project, supporting 150 scientists and technicians assessing the condition of juvenile Chinook, Coho and Steelhead and their marine environment. Also in 2017, \$25,000 was contributed to the Sooke Chinook Enhancement Initiative which successfully released 210,000 juvenile Chinook salmon.

“We have always invested in conservation programs but we are dramatically ramping up our efforts,” McGillivray said. “The health and sustainability of these majestic mammals requires all of us to do our part.”

The new money will be invested through the soon-to-be formed Prince of Whales Marine Wildlife Foundation which will have a mandate to support leading-edge orca research, prey enhancement measures and marine sound reduction technology.

“The southern resident orcas are a vulnerable population of just 74 members,” said Ken Balcomb of the Centre for Whale Research. “Our number one goal, on both sides of the Canada-U.S. border, is to increase natural wild Chinook abundance. These conservation efforts can make a meaningful difference.”

A recent report from the Pacific Whale Watching Association states that southern resident orcas now account for fewer than 15% of overall sightings. Most tours now focus on viewing transient orcas and the thriving population of migratory humpback whales.

Prince of Whales Whale Watching is one of the largest eco-adventure and marine wildlife tour companies in British Columbia. The company, which operates in Victoria and Vancouver, continues to reduce its impact by decreasing the underwater sound signature of its vessels through sound dampening technology and ongoing investment in industry-leading marine propulsion systems.

For more information, high resolution images or video, contact:

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