

**JEFFERSON COUNTY
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
AGENDA REQUEST**

TO: Board of County Commissioners

FROM: Adiel McKnight, Executive Assistant

DATE: January 17, 2023

SUBJECT: PROCLAMATION re: Declaration of Rights for the Southern Resident Orcas

STATEMENT OF ISSUE:

The proposed proclamation recognizes the importance of the Southern Resident Orcas. Southern Resident Orcas are culturally, spiritually, and economically important to the people of the Pacific Northwest. Despite federal protection under the Endangered Species Act, the Southern Resident Orca population continues to decline, with fewer than 80 individuals left. Earth Law Center and Legal Rights for the Salish Sea are calling on local communities, state legislatures and governors to recognize the inherent rights of the Southern Resident Orcas and the ecosystems upon which they depend, and to take immediate actions to protect and restore the Orcas' rights by addressing their main threats to survival.

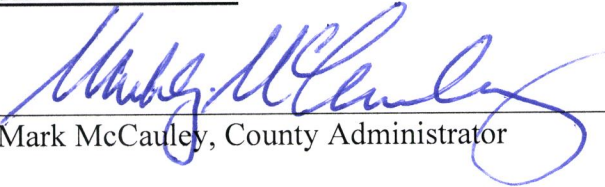
FISCAL IMPACT:

Today's proclamation has no direct fiscal cost.

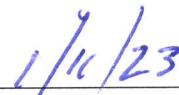
RECOMMENDATION:

That BoCC approve the attached Proclamation.

REVIEWED BY:



Mark McCauley, County Administrator



Date

PROCLAMATION

Declaration of Rights for the Southern Resident Orcas

WHEREAS, the Southern Resident Orcas are culturally, spiritually, and economically important to the people of Washington State and the world. However, despite legal protections for nearly two decades, the population continues to decline and is critically endangered, with only 73 of these magnificent creatures left in the wild; and

WHEREAS, the Orcas' survival is dependent on healthy and functioning ecosystems including the Salish Sea, the Fraser River Watershed, the Columbia River Basin, and the lower Snake River Watershed; and

WHEREAS, over 20 countries, dozens of local communities in the United States, and several tribal governments have recognized that Nature has inherent rights, and that Human Society has the responsibility to protect and steward Nature in a manner consistent with our interconnected relationship; and

WHEREAS, Nature and all living beings, including the Southern Resident Orcas and the ecosystems upon which they depend, are recognized as possessing inherent rights, including the right to exist, flourish, evolve, regenerate, recover, and be restored; and

WHEREAS, the rights of the Southern Resident Orcas include, but are not limited to, the right to: life, autonomy, culture, free and safe passage, adequate food supply from naturally occurring sources, and freedom from conditions causing physical, emotional, or mental harm, including a habitat degraded by noise, pollution and contamination;

NOW THEREFORE, the Jefferson County Board of Commissioners does hereby proclaim a Declaration of Rights for the Southern Resident Orcas and urges action by local, state, federal, and tribal governments to secure the ecosystems upon which these orcas depend.

PROCLAIMED this 17th day of January, 2023.

JEFFERSON COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

SEAL:

Greg Brotherton, Chair

ATTEST:

Kate Dean, Member

Carolyn Gallaway, CMC Clerk of the Board

Heidi Eisenhour, Member