

PROTECT OUR ORCAS BY CURTAILING SUCTION DREDGE MINING

Whereas the three Southern Resident Orca pods, that inhabit Puget Sound and Washington coastal waters during most of the year, rely on salmon as their principal food; and

Whereas those three orca pods are the only orca population formally listed as “endangered” under the Endangered Species Act, having been so designated in 2005 by both the National Marine Fisheries Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; and

Whereas Ken Balcomb, a whale researcher for over forty years and the founder of the Center for Whale Research in Friday Harbor, has documented the declining numbers of the Southern Resident Orcas and confirmed – in a KING-5 TV segment on August 8, 2019 – that their decline is primarily due to their not getting enough to eat; and

Whereas Suction Dredge Mining, a destructive form of mining that uses motorized equipment in rivers and streams in order to extract gold and other metals, is sometimes used in Washington streams and rivers, where it wreaks serious damage to salmon spawning beds; and

Whereas natural resource scientists, anglers, and members of the general public have expressed concern regarding the adverse impacts of Suction Dredge Mining on salmon spawning beds in Washington streams and rivers; and

Whereas the Washington State Legislature passed four bills in 2019 to protect our Southern Resident Orca pods, but failed to address the critical need to protect salmon spawning beds; and

Whereas the Oregon Legislature has addressed Suction Dredge Mining by prohibiting such practice in 20,700 miles of streams and rivers it has designated as Critical Spawning Areas; and

Whereas the State of California, as of August 6, 2019 (and continuing to this day), has banned Suction Dredge Mining in all of the State's streams and rivers;

Therefore, be it resolved that we formally request that the Washington State Legislature, in its 2020 Supplemental Session, ensure that the Southern Resident Orca pods have a prey base sufficient to rebuild their seriously depleted numbers by promptly (1) requiring designation and protection of Critical Spawning Areas in specified Washington streams and rivers (as in Oregon), *or* (2) banning outright the practice of Suction Dredge Mining in all Washington streams and rivers (as in California).

Adopted January 28, 2020, by the Martin Luther King County Democratic Central Committee

Previously adopted January 8, 2020, by the 32nd District Democratic Organization

Previously adopted by the Jefferson County Democrats;

Submitted by Jim Freeburg, 206-245-0059, jifreeburg@yahoo.com