



Quiet Sound Leadership Committee Meeting Summary

July 18, 2023

Meeting notes v. 9/25/23

Action Items	Who	Status
Tribal engagement re: slowdown parameters - send draft parameters for feedback and potentially present at NWIFC	QS staff	Tribes (chairs and Natural Resources leads) sent draft parameters for feedback by mail and email
Plan strategic plan planning	QS staff and Kate	
Save-the-dates for strategic planning planning	QS staff	
Start prep for VIP event	QS staff	In progress, currently looking at first two weeks of December

Decisions

The LC decided to approve the proposed parameters for the 2023-24 voluntary vessel slowdown pending tribal engagement

Acronyms: QS - Quiet Sound, WG - Work Group, LC - Leadership Committee, SRKW - Southern Resident Killer Whale

Agenda

Welcome/Introductions

- Land and water acknowledgement
- Orca moment
 - Two new babies in L pod!
 - [Quiet Sound receives NOAA Partner in the Spotlight award](#)
- Agenda overview and expectations

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Project Updates

Caitlin O'Morchoe gave updates on the major Quiet Sound projects currently underway.

- Project 1: Further Develop the Whale Report Alert System
 - **API:** WRAS API testing continues. This will connect WRAS to Acartia.io, Whale Alert, Orca Network data and the JASCO hydrophone in BC. Quiet Sound staff are meeting with Ocean Wise next week to discuss final timing of the API.
 - **Connecting WRAS to the Portable Pilot Units (PPUs):** Currently pilots get WRAS alerts through their personal cell phones. Both Puget Sound Pilots and BC Coast Pilots use PPUs built and maintained by a Canadian company called Navsim. Navsim has agreed to cover the resources needed to develop a beta test for putting WRAS alerts directly into navigation charts via the PPUs. No timeline is set yet but we will have an update at the next LC meeting. For this to work, PPUs need to be connected to the internet with a SIM card, which they tend not to be right now.
 - **Sending alerts via the Marine Exchange:** The Marine Exchange and partners are in early days of exploring how the Marine Exchange could use its current and future capabilities to share whale alerts to mariners in real time. Options range from text, email, the Marine Exchange AIS feed, or, potentially eventually, through AIS messaging to vessels.
 - **New contract with Orca Network** to provide sightings to WRAS
- Project 3: Port of Seattle hydrophone gap analysis
 - Port of Seattle targeting a Sept 2023 start to the hydrophone gap analysis work
- Project 4: Oceans Initiative hydrophone study
 - Expecting a final report from Oceans Initiative soon, and hoping to invite OI for a report to the LC after publication.
- Project 5: Navy NW Tech Bridge Challenge
 - UnCruise's sea trials currently active
 - UnCruise will join Maritime Blue's new business incubator program, funded by Port of Seattle, for early-stage business development support
- New project: Hydrophone feasibility study
 - Caitlin shared the verbiage from the Quiet Sound NFWF proposal
 - Joshua noted that he's met with the Allen Institute for AI and they're interested in contributing expertise, but would need a clear role.
 - Lynne noted that NOAA recorders are not in real time, but it would be helpful to capture the presence of those NOAA devices to show the full spectrum of what is out there. Caitlin noted that the scope did need to be focused on devices that could be connected to WRAS, and distinguished from the original concept for the Port of Seattle study.

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- Kathleen noted that QS could coordinate with Port of Seattle to make sure this doesn't duplicate efforts.
 - Regan noted that this study is focused on hydrophones that detect whales, and that the Port of Seattle's study would be very valuable if it was looking at hydrophones that could detect ship noise.
- Laird suggested checking in with the Navy regarding what real-time hydrophones they're aware of.
- Kevin noted that Europe has some real-time whale detection systems coming on line that could be examples: <https://life-seadetec.eu/>

Voluntary vessel slowdown

Jason Wood from SMRU Consulting presented the final results of the acoustic analysis

- Review SMRU final report for analysis details
- 2.8 dB reduction in ambient underwater noise is similar to the results ECHO is seeing in their slowdowns
- Even though not every vessel met the speed targets, many slowed their speed which helped contribute to the overall reduction in underwater noise
- If we achieve higher participation rates, will the noise reduction increase in decibel number? - no because of the logarithmic scale measurements that describe decibels. Note that this measurement does not have a temporal component and increased participation could lead to lower noise levels for an increased duration of time
- Has ECHO defined parameters around a biological goal? - rough estimate is there is about a 20% reduction in lost foraging time from ECHO's programs
- What does the noise reduction analysis really mean for the animals? We need better, updated, science based targets for noise reduction and biological efficacy metrics

Caitlin O'Morchoe presented the draft parameters for the 2023-24 slowdown

- See attached slowdown parameters proposal
- Timeline review:
 - 2022-23 slowdown concluded Jan 12, 2023
 - Conducted debrief conversations
 - Reviewed SMRU acoustic analysis
 - Convened the Evaluation & Adaptive Management, Monitoring Whales & Vessel Noise, and Vessel Operations & Incentives work groups to review analysis
 - Drafted slowdown final report
 - Met with key stakeholders (Pilots, PMSA, Marine Exchange)
 - Convened the work groups to gain feedback on draft 2023-24 parameters

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- Today: Approve 2023-24 slowdown parameters at July Leadership Committee meeting (contingent upon tribal engagement)
- Parameters:
 - Location and speed targets stay the same
 - Propose a change in duration - dynamic start in response to whale presence on or after Oct 1, officially extend slowdown to Jan 12
 - A potential earlier start could mean overlapping with the cruise season
- Joshua - this design builds on the success of the last slowdown while being responsive to needed changes
- Did QS consider a dynamic end date to the slowdown? - no because of data collection needs and limits on hydrophone battery power
- Does QS know what is happening speed-wise in the transition zones? Are vessels speeding up outside of the slowdown area? - we heard from the Puget Sound Pilots that vessels would not speed up faster than the speed they would usually be going though we did not look at ship speeds via AIS outside of the slowdown area
- Is this program still a trial? Do we take the word "trial" out of the title? - probably yes, recognizing that little tweaks will continue to happen to the slowdown program over time
- Are we considering additional slowdown areas anywhere else? - Not in this season, but possibly yes for future seasons, though much planning and discussion is needed before deciding on anything
- When does ECHO use a dynamic vs. static start for their slowdowns? - when Pilots are onboard for the program a dynamic start is easier regarding communications, the slowdown off Swiftsure Bank is harder to communicate because Pilots are not onboard and therefore static
- What is QS's tribal engagement plan? - in June Rachel reached out to Tribal elected officials and natural resources staff to share results of the 2022-23 slowdown, QS will inform the same contacts of the proposed parameters for the 2023-24 slowdown, Tribes will also have an option to give feedback via the hydrophone permitting process for the Army Corps of Engineers
- Presenting to the NWIFC would be a good idea - QS to reach out to Randy
- Tug boats and the voluntary vessel slowdown
 - Tugs made up about 55% of the transits through the slowdown area
 - Tugs are not currently included in the slowdown program
 - Want to make sure WRAS/whale alerts are available to tugs as a mitigation measure
 - We've heard that neither the slowdown nor a lateral displacement will be a good fit for tugs in this slowdown area
 - QS met with AWO to start the conversation around tugs and underwater noise, they are eager to participate in what ways they can
 - WRAS is not available for many tugs as phones are not allowed on the bridge and some orgs do not have operations centers that can be monitoring the app



Quiet Sound strategic planning prep

- Qs is contracting with Kate Snider for a strategic planning process
- Goal is to have a list of projects and their priority levels to present to potential funders as well as a 5-year plan
- There will be some work time with QS staff, QS work groups, and LC members
- What are the LC's goals for a QS strategic plan? How do LC members want to participate?
 - There is a lot of support by LC members that its is the right time for this process and interest in participating in early brainstorming meetings outside of regular LC meetings
 - Early info gathering from work group leads regarding how to best utilize work groups would be good
 - Interest in articulating where QS wants to be in 5 years in regards to biological targets and/or developing more specific metrics to measure success
 - Recognize that this process will need additional dedicated time from LC members and QS staff
 - This strategic planning process is a major work item in QS's contract with PSP/the state

Updates from LC members

- Port of Seattle targeting a Sept 2023 start to the hydrophone gap analysis work
- US Senate, Commerce Justice and Science committee has included \$300,000 in their budget, not in the House bill, yet
- QS is working on hiring a part-time grad fellow, current YMAP intern
- Marine Exchange hired a data analyst intern
- Puget Sound Harbor Safety Committee meeting Aug 2nd, including Coast Guard HQ folks
- International Maritime Organization (IMO) committee approved revised voluntary underwater noise guidelines for large ships, and additional actions - 3 year experience building phase
- NOAA updates - reviewing proposals for the Education & Outreach grant (QS submitted a proposal), meetings upcoming with Coast Guard re: Cetacean Desk, meeting with Be Whale Wise partners to think about upcoming 2025 regulations, this year is 50th anniversary of the Endangered Species Act
- QS will be organizing another VIP briefing/press event for the fall/winter
- Cetacean Desk - 2-pronged approach, looking at an initial version to be stood up this year while simultaneously working on the longer-term, intentionally built program

Attendees

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- Laird Hail, Director of Puget Sound Vessel Traffic Services, US Coast Guard
- LCDR Margaret Woodbridge, Cetacean Desk Program Manager, US Coast Guard Sector Puget Sound
- Rachel Aronson, Quiet Sound Program Director, Washington Maritime Blue
- Caitlin O'Morchoe, Quiet Sound Project Manager, Washington Maritime Blue
- Patrick Gallagher, Executive Director of the Marine Exchange of Puget Sound
- Kate Snider, Principal and Founder of Floyd|Snider environmental consulting firm
- Todd Hass, Special Assistant to the Director, Puget Sound Partnership
- Nora Nickum, Ocean Policy Senior Manager at Seattle Aquarium
- Kathleen Hurley, Sr. Environmental Program Manager, Port of Seattle
- Joshua Berger, President/CEO of Washington Maritime Blue
- Regan Nelson, Senior Advocate, Oceans Program, Marine Mammal Protection Project at the Natural Resources Defense Council
- Natalie Lowell, Policy Analyst for the Makah Tribe
- Jason Jordan, Director of Environmental Programs at Port of Tacoma
- Jason Wood, Managing Director, SMRU Consulting
- Lynne Barre, Branch Chief, Protected Resources Division, NOAA Fisheries
- Kevin Bartoy, Chief Sustainability Officer for WA State Ferries