



A Program of Maritime Blue

# Quiet Sound Advisory Committee (ORCAs) Meeting Summary

Mar 20, 2026

## Action Items & Decisions

Action Items	Who
Convene a group to monitor and document vessel activity and noise during the World Cup. Connect with Alex if interested in participating in the above.	Alex Borowicz All
Coordinate communications, and information needs for the U.S. Navy regarding hydrophone and thermal camera specs.	Gonzalo Banda-Cruz (Quiet Sound) & Margaret Moran-Dour (Navy)
Send Google Form for second thermal camera location feedback to members.	Gonzalo Banda-Cruz

Connect Julie Watson with the Washington Public Ports Association and Port of Seattle.	Rachel Aronson / Kathleen Hurley
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## Meeting Notes

### Welcome/Introductions

The meeting was facilitated by Rachel Aronson, who provided a land and water acknowledgement, highlighting the critical role of our Tribal partners—specifically the Makah, Suquamish, and Port Gamble S’Klallam Tribes—in our shared mission. Candice Emmons of NOAA shared an "Orca Moment" regarding a new K-pod calf, **K47**, potentially born to K36. This would be the first surviving calf for K36 and a significant event for the pod. The meeting began with introductions and a short icebreaker activity.

### Visual Sightings Project Update

Serena Tierra (Orca Network) provided a summary of the winter sighting season.

- **Activity:** Orca Network made 943 real-time entries to WRAS between December and February.
- **Key Visits:** Highlights included a super-pod event and several visits from K-pod with their new calf, K47.
- **Baleen Whales:** Increased humpback presence was noted, with 11–12 individuals currently identified.

### Questions and Comments:

- **Q :** How much of your data comes from "frequent flyers" versus first-time reporters?
  - **A:** About 20 people submit over 100 reports a year, while thousands of others submit 1–10. It is a very wide spectrum.
- **Q :** Which social media channels are most active for sightings?
  - **A:** The Facebook community group is the largest with over 100,000 members, though dynamics shift constantly.

### Long-Term Hydrophone & Thermal Camera Updates

Gonzalo Banda-Cruz also provided an update on the long-term hydrophone project.

- **Point No Point (Hydrophone):** This remains the priority site for Phase 1. Tribal engagement is moving forward positively, with discussions focused on ensuring

equipment does not infringe on treaty fishing rights. Current modeling and sediment checks (sand vs. rock) are ongoing.

- Nighttime Alerts: The thermal camera at Point Wilson is effectively closing the gap in nighttime sightings. In 2025, it generated over 1,000 alerts, with Washington State Ferries being the primary recipient of real-time data.
- Response Time: The system averages 4 minutes from AI detection to a verified alert being sent to mariners.
- Expansion: Quiet Sound is looking to site a second thermal camera for the 26-27 fiscal year. A survey was shared with the group to gather expert input on high-traffic/high-use locations.
- Second Camera Brainstorm: The attendees discussed potential locations for a second camera, including:
  - Point Robinson: Suggested due to its role in the "Seattle Shuffle" transit pattern. (note: vessels shuffling around (or "killing time") near Seattle because they have to wait for a berth, pilot, or schedule slot)
  - A participant suggested Neah Bay due to high whale use off the coast.
    - Another participant noted that whales often stay mid-strait or on the north shore, making Neah Bay a potential challenge for thermal range.
  - Participants suggested that a thermal camera in Rosario Strait could fill a visual sighting gap where only ferries currently provide reports.

#### Questions and Comments:

- Q : Will the second thermal camera require a new tower, or will it use existing infrastructure?
  - A: We are prioritizing existing towers (Coast Guard, VTS, or private antennas), as we do not have the resources to build new structures.
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#### Project Updates: Admiralty Inlet Slowdown Discussion

Sara Adams provided an update on the Admiralty Inlet slowdown, which ran September 14, 2025-January 11, 2026.

- Participation: 64% of transits reduced speed; 56% met specific speed targets.
- Season Duration: This season was 21 days longer than any previous year, starting September 14 due to early whale presence.
- Operational Trends: Participation dipped during severe weather in November. Fleet-specific reports sent to managers were credited with correcting participation mid-season.
- Dashboard Development: Sara Adams explained that Quiet Sound is pursuing the

development of a real-time dashboard using PowerBI or Tableau to allow fleet managers to monitor their own vessels' participation directly.

- Acoustic results will be published in summer 2026.

#### Questions and Comments:

- Q: There is a distinction between Speed Over Ground and Speed Through Water. How is Quiet Sound calculating this?
  - A: We use the Salish Sea NEMO model to correct AIS data for tides and currents. All reported data is Speed Through Water.
  - C: ECHO is seeing an increasing gap (now ~20%) between pilot-reported participation and AIS data, partly due to "operational fatigue"
- C: A participant noted that Quiet Sound often uses "AIS-calculated participation" as shorthand for "Participation calculated by AIS data processed through a tidal model" and noted that some more casual observers did not understand the SOG/STW difference. Quiet Sound appreciated the feedback and committed to looking for a better way to communicate how participation is calculated.

### Project 2026 World Cup Maritime Coordination & Acoustic Mitigation

Julie Watson (WDFW) led a discussion on the potential whale impacts and solutions for the upcoming FIFA World Cup (June–July 2026).

- Risks: Potential for high volumes of out-of-state boaters and "super yachts" unfamiliar with local whale regulations.
- Strategies:
  - Developing "Be Whale Wise" materials in multiple languages (Arabic, French, Spanish).
  - Engaging "Yacht Concierge" services to reach international visitors before they enter critical habitats.
  - Public communications
- Science Opportunity: The group discussed using the World Cup as a case study to measure noise pressure during mega-sporting events, and providing "lessons learned" to the next World Cup host cities.

#### Questions and Comments:

- Q: Is the whale watch industry seeing a spike in reservations for the World Cup period?
  - A: WDFW haven't confirmed those numbers yet but plans to connect with the Pacific Whale Watch Association (PWWA) to gauge anticipated demand.

- C: King County Water Taxi is part of an international group coordinating for the event. Terry noted that moving passengers quickly is the top priority to prevent safety issues. The group has not yet discussed anything related to marine mammals.
- C: A participant reminded the group that foreign-flagged yachts need a Washington pilot or a waiver, which is a key intervention point for outreach.

## Member updates

- GSRO: Tara Galuska noted a difficult legislative session with significant cuts to natural resources.
- Legislative Update: The "Mosquito Fleet Act" (HB 1923) did not pass due to controversies unrelated to its whale protection language. The proposed legislation may return in 2027.
- ECHO Program: A March trial slowdown is currently active in Haro Strait and Boundary Pass. Pilot-reported participation is currently at 80%.
- The next meeting will take place in June 2026.

## Attendees:

1. Adrienne Stutes, Washington State Ferries
2. Alex Borowicz, Whale Museum
3. Alex Mitchell, Ocean Wise
4. Andrea Doyle, AltaGas
5. Candice Emmons, NOAA
6. Cheryl Ng, VFPA ECHO Program
7. David Bain, Orca Conservancy
8. Gonzalo Banda-Cruz, Quiet Sound
9. Jackie Shaff, Marine Mammal Commission
10. Jostein Kalvøy, Puget Sound Pilots
11. Kathleen Hurley, Port of Seattle
12. Liam Moorcroft, AWO
13. Maggie Moran-Dour U.S. Navy
14. Marla Holt, NOAA
15. Meghan Reckmeyer, NWSA/Port of Tacoma
16. Michael Judson, Ocean Wise
17. Monica Wieland Shields, Orca Behavior Institute
18. Nick Zylstra, Kitsap Transit
19. Rachel Aronson, Quiet Sound
20. Ryan Dicks, Pierce County
21. Sara Adams, Quiet Sound
22. Sara Thompson, Department of Ecology
23. Serena Tierra, Orca Network

24. Stephanie Raymond, Orca Network
25. Tara Galuska, GSRO
26. Terry Federer, King County Water Taxi
27. Todd Hass, Puget Sound Partnership