



A Program of Maritime Blue

Quiet Sound Advisory Committee (ORCAs) Meeting Summary

Sep 18, 2026

Action Items & Decisions

Action Items	Who
Distribute excerpts of WRAS alerts displayed on NavSim PPUs and Trelleborg systems to the committee.	Chloe Robinson / Gonzalo Banda-Cruz
Investigate the acoustic impacts of Controllable Pitch Propellers (CPP) on Matson vessels (Tacoma, Kodiak, Anchorage) to determine if slowing down increases cavitation noise.	Sara Adams / Jostein Kalvøy
Connect with the Marine Exchange of Alaska (Arctic Watch) regarding lessons learned from their marine mammal AIS alert system.	Gonzalo Banda-Cruz / Jackie Shaff

Meeting Notes

Welcome/Introductions

Rachel Aronson opened the meeting, emphasizing the value of cross-sector collaboration between maritime, government, and conservation partners to drive Southern Resident recovery. She delivered a land and water acknowledgement.

- **Orca Moment:** Serena Tierra (Orca Network) shared video footage of J-Pod. The pod arrived in North Puget Sound on September 3, quickly triggering the Admiralty Inlet slowdown. K and L pods have also been sighted. The unofficial population count remains stable at **76**, with calves L130, K47, J62, and J63 all verified and healthy.

SRKW Detections and Alerts

Gonzalo Banda-Cruz briefed the committee on network scaling and hardware deployments.

- **Data Integration Success:** The Whale Report and Whale Alert systems are now actively sharing data bi-directionally. Between August and September, the network logged 762 cetacean detections, generating nearly 7,500 alerts to mariners.
- **Point No Point Hydrophone Permitting:** Deployment from shore involves complex regulatory navigation, requiring a shoreline exemption from Kitsap County, a USCG permit of use of their easement for the tidelands, and a WA DNR permit for the seabed. Quiet Sound (with SMRU acting as consultant) will use armored cable to protect the infrastructure from local anchoring and fishing activity.
- **Thermal Camera Enhancements:** The Point Wilson thermal camera is performing consistently with a stable 1.5 km mean detection range, and up to 4.5km distances. A new **directionality module** is now live, generating travel vectors (e.g., Northwest vs. Southeast) based on consecutive thermal signatures to provide richer data to WRAS.
- **Future Locations:** Two new cameras are funded (via NFWF and PSP). Quiet Sound also submitted a proposal to the DoD's REPI Challenge in partnership with Naval Base Kitsap to fund three additional dual-camera systems and operational verification costs.

Questions and Comments:

- **Q:** Would or could the thermal camera and hydrophone data be auto-linked to quickly ID ecotype?
 - **A:** Ideally, yes. Achieving this will require a contractor, but matching bioacoustics with thermal signatures and high-resolution visual identification remains the ultimate objective for Point-no-Point systems.
- **C:** Noted that the Sunset Bay hydrophone (located between Edmonds and Mukilteo) successfully captures acoustic detections in wide-channel areas where whales are difficult to spot from shore, and offered to share this data with Quiet Sound.

Admiralty Inlet Slowdown

Sara Adams updated the committee on the current slowdown season.

- **Slowdown Status:** The Admiralty Inlet slowdown officially commenced on September 4, 2026. Noise reduction will be quantified using the statistical sampling model developed last year, which incorporates cruise ship data and ECHO's acoustic sets to calculate whole-season impacts.

Strategic Plan

Rachel Aronson shared the Quiet Sound Leadership Committee's priority focus areas through 2028 with the ORCAs.

- **Strategic Plan:** Priority focus areas for the coming year include:
 - Adaptively manage the Admiralty Inlet Slowdown; improve reporting to participants and partners
 - Bi-weekly, monthly participation reports to fleet managers
 - Ensure alignment with current (ECHO) + potential future regional environmental programs
 - Continue engagement with passenger-only ferries
 - Developing a real-time dashboard linking ship ID, AIS, and participation data for fleet managers.
 - Rolling out and tracking the efficacy of the newly passed Tug Standard of Care in the Puget Sound Harbor Safety Committee.
 - Financially support the labor to collect and send Washington-based sightings to a WRAS-connected system
 - Provide nighttime and foul weather detections of cetaceans through remote sensing (thermal and hi-res visual imaging)
 - Install the underwater listening station at Point No Point
 - Reach vessels without WRAS via AIS messages for real-time whale detections within the WRAS system
 - Stay up-to-date on IMO URN work; contribute lessons learned where relevant
 - Steering committee of the USCMI URN Workgroup

Questions and Comments:

- **Q:** Are electric vessels and new designs like hydrofoils completely safe for marine mammals since they are quieter?
 - **A:** Not necessarily. While resilient engine mounts on electric tugs dissipate noise in transit, cavitation from the propeller remains the primary noise source when pushing or towing. Furthermore, the physical presence and speed of any vessel—regardless of its propulsion—can disrupt foraging behaviors.
- **C:** Vessels equipped with Controllable Pitch Propellers (CPP), such as the Matson ships calling in Alaska, alter pitch rather than RPMs to reduce speed. Slowing these specific

vessels may actually increase cavitation and noise, making them prime candidates for further acoustic evaluation.

- **A:** Quiet Sound noted this is exactly the type of ship noise measurement we'll be able to do with the underwater listening station at PNP.

AIS Messaging

Quiet Sound is actively exploring the broadcast of whale alerts directly to ship bridges via Type-A AIS messages to bypass cell service limitations and standardize delivery across navigational systems.

Questions and Comments

- **C:** Warning against "alert fatigue." If captains receive an excessive volume of automated pings, they may begin to ignore them. The alert parameters must be carefully calibrated.
- **C:** Recommended aligning with the upcoming **S-100 Electronic Chart (ECDIS)** standards (e.g., S-122 for Marine Protected Areas or S-130 for polygons). Routing the data as a dynamic chart layer rather than a direct AIS text ping represents the optimal future state for bridge integration.
- **C:** This could be especially useful to tug operators.
- **C:** ECHO is currently in discussions with the Canadian Coast Guard regarding a dynamic AIS "Area Notice." Rather than pinging individual whale locations, the system would broadcast a polygon showing an active slowdown area that turns on and off dynamically based on whale presence blocks (e.g., 4–6 days).
- **C:** The Marine Exchange of Alaska (Arctic Watch program) is exploring similar marine mammal AIS alerts and navigating the same Coast Guard protocol hurdles. Offer to connect the teams to share strategic insights.

Member updates

- **Orca Network:** Hosting the "Orcas in the Outfield" theme night at the Seattle Mariners game on September 26, featuring new education materials and a ceremonial first pitch.
- **Oceans Initiative:** Hosting a Town Hall Seattle panel on SRKW recovery on October 5, featuring Joe Gaydos (SeaDoc) and Misty MacDuffee (Raincoast).
- **Governor's Salmon Recovery Office (GSRO):** Orca Recovery Day is scheduled for October 17 with regional partner events. Tara Galuska noted that the state's 2027-2029 operating budget will be highly constrained. The joint Navy/Coast Guard Northwest Training and Testing Plan is currently open for public comment until October 19.
- **Pierce County:** Ryan Dicks announced an initiative to convene Snohomish, Kitsap, King, Thurston, and Pierce Counties within the next 6 months to formalize the role of local county governments in whale recovery.
- **Quiet Sound:** Will host a public reporting session and networking hour (sponsored by Hapag-Lloyd and PMSA) during Maritime Blue's **One Ocean Week** on October 19 at the

Seattle Aquarium.

Shared Resources in the chat

The following resources were submitted to the record during the session via the chat:

- **Quiet Sound Communications:**
 - Newsletter Sign-Up: <https://quietsound.org/contact>
 - Quiet Sound 2024-25 Slowdown Final Report & Publications: <https://quietsound.org/publications>
- **Scientific Studies (Shared by Oceans Initiative):**
 - Effects of ship slow-down on SRKWs: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/34563959/>
 - Ship-strike risk metrics: <https://journal.iwc.int/index.php/jcrm/article/view/624>
- **Events & Ticketing:**
 - Seattle Mariners "Orcas in the Outfield" Tickets: <https://www.mlb.com/mariners/tickets/specials/orcas>
 - Town Hall Seattle "Saving Our Orcas" Event: <https://townhallseattle.org/event/act-now-saving-our-orcas/>
 - Orca Recovery Day 2026 Partner Events: [Better Ground Portal](#)
 - One Ocean Week Seattle / Event RSVPs: <https://luma.com/jptoaggg> | <https://luma.com/oows>
- **Maritime Policy & Safety Documents:**
 - Puget Sound Harbor Safety Plan (June 2026 Update): <https://marexps.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/Puget-Sound-Harbor-Safety-Plan.pdf>

Attendees:

1. Rachel Aronson (Quiet Sound),
2. Sara Adams (Quiet Sound),
3. Gonzalo Banda-Cruz (Quiet Sound),
4. Serena Tierra (Orca Network),
5. Stephanie Raymond (Orca Network),
6. Tara Galuska (GSRO),
7. Alexis Borowicz (Whale Museum),
8. Anthony Pinto (USCG),
9. Jacob Masga (USCG),
10. Chloe Robinson (Ocean Wise),
11. David Bain (Orca Conservancy),
12. Jennifer McIntyre (ECHO Program),
13. Derek White (ECHO Program),
14. Jostein Kalvøy (Puget Sound Pilots),
15. Kathleen Hurley (Port of Seattle),

16. Min Kim (Port of Seattle),
17. Kyle Burleson (AWO),
18. Meghan Reckmeyer (NWSA),
19. Miguela Marzolf (Seattle Aquarium),
20. Ryan Dicks (Pierce County),
21. Sara Thompson (WA Ecology),
22. Haley Kennard (WA Ecology),
23. Nick Zylstra (Kitsap Transit),
24. Julie Watson (WDFW),
25. Erin Ashe (Oceans Initiative),
26. Jackie Shaff (MMC).
27. Andrea Doyle (Altagas)