

Summary of the Imminent Threat Assessment for the Southern Resident Killer Whale

The Minister of Fisheries, Oceans, and the Canadian Coast Guard and the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada, as the Minister responsible for Parks Canada Agency, have formed the opinion that the Southern Resident Killer Whale (SRKW), is facing imminent threats to its survival and recovery.

The known range of this population is from Northern British Columbia and southeastern Alaska to central California (Figure 1). During summer, its members are usually found in waters off southern Vancouver Island and Northern Washington State, where they congregate to intercept migratory salmon.

The Ministers each came to this opinion after reviewing an Imminent Threat Assessment that considered the biological condition of the Southern Resident Killer Whale population, ongoing threats, and mitigation measures. The key threats to the SRKW are prey availability, physical and acoustic disturbances, and environmental contaminants.

The Imminent Threat Assessment is based on the best available information including:

- [the COSEWIC Assessment and Update Status Report on the Killer Whale *Orcinus orca* in Canada](#)
- [the Recovery Strategy for the Northern and Southern Resident Killer Whales \(*Orcinus orca*\) in Canada](#)
- [the Action Plan for the Northern and Southern Resident Killer Whale \(*Orcinus orca*\) in Canada](#)
- [the Review of the Effectiveness of Recovery Measures for Southern Resident Killer Whales](#)

The Ministers found that the SRKW is facing threats, which are considered imminent in the sense that intervention is required to allow for survival and eventual recovery.

The SRKW is listed as an endangered wildlife species on Schedule 1 of the Species at Risk Act. The federal recovery strategy was posted on the Species at Risk Public Registry in 2011. As stated in the federal recovery strategy, the long-term recovery goal is to:

“Ensure the long-term viability of resident killer whale populations by achieving and maintaining demographic conditions that preserve their reproductive potential, genetic variation, and cultural continuity.”

Only 76 SRKW individuals remain and the population is in decline. Additionally, the population is segregated into small units that are closed to immigration and emigration, their capacity for population growth is limited by a suite of life history and social factors, including late onset of sexual maturity, small numbers of reproductive females and mature males, long calving intervals and they have a dependence on the cultural transmission of ecological and social information.

The complete Imminent Threat Assessment prepared by Fisheries and Oceans Canada in collaboration with Parks Canada Agency, Environment and Climate Change Canada and Transport Canada that informed the Ministers' opinion, will be posted to the Species at Risk Public Registry in July 2018.

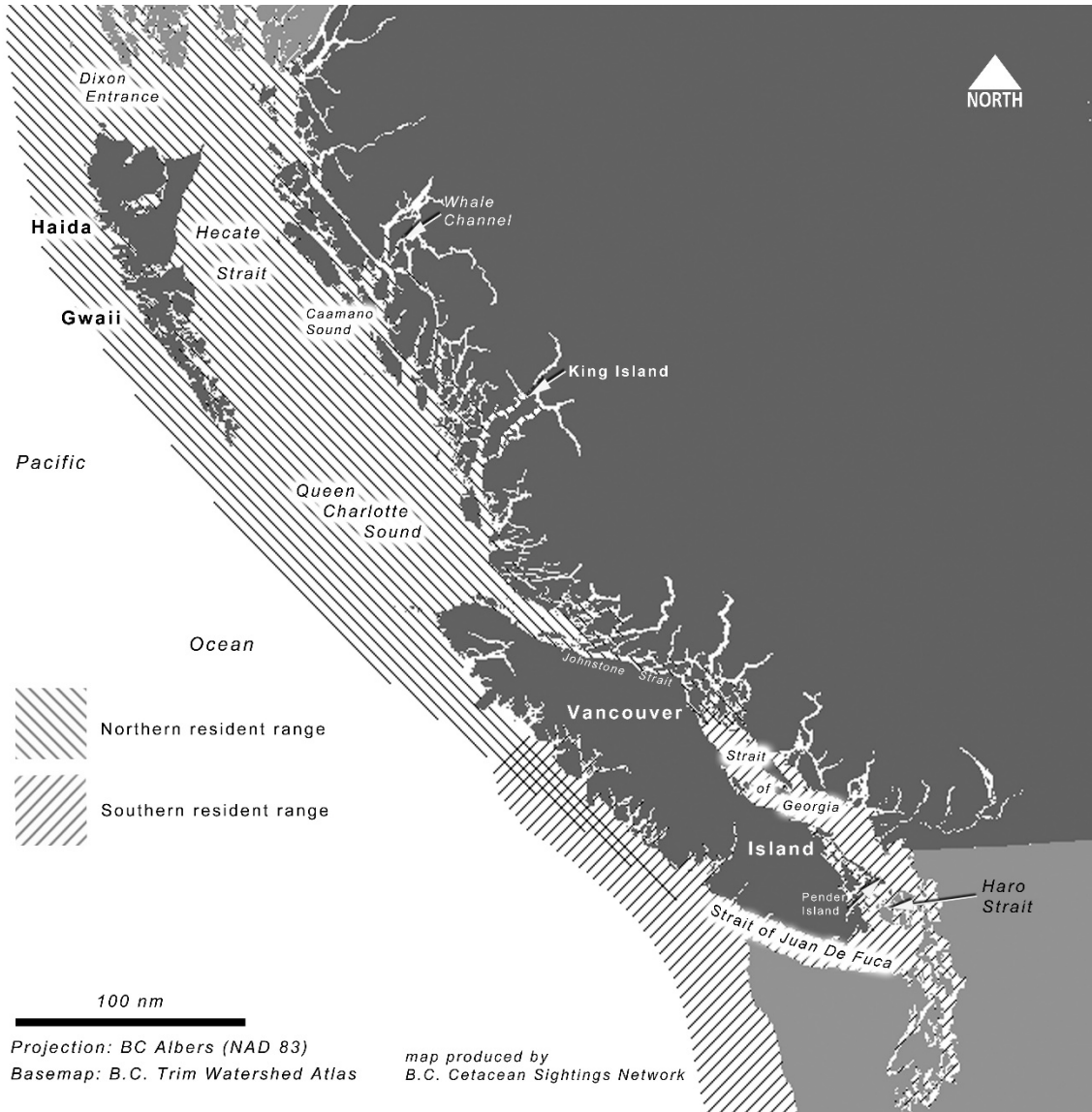


Figure 1. The coast of British Columbia and northwest Washington State showing the general ranges of Northern and Southern Resident Killer Whales.