

## Orca Recovery Day Inspires Oregonians to Act Now

*Oregon nonprofits will host volunteers on October 19, for salmon habitat restoration projects throughout the state*

**Portland, Oregon:** On Saturday October 19, Oregon nonprofits and hundreds of volunteers will take action for Orca Recovery Day at four habitat restoration projects throughout the state. The [endangered status](#) of the Southern Resident orca living along the West Coast prompted conservation groups, corporations (Alaska Airlines) and individuals alike to unite in action under [Promise the Pod](#), a regional effort from British Columbia to Northern California that aims to increase funding in support of salmon and orca. This initiative is raising \$1 million towards tree planting through non-profit One Tree Planted and seeking to help fill a \$20 million gap in funding for priority projects that support three different groups of salmon-reliant orca, known as J, K, and L pods.

Down to just 73 individuals - the lowest number since 1976, Southern Resident orca populations are in bleak decline due to lack of food supply (primarily Chinook salmon), toxic contaminants, and noise pollution from ships that disrupts the orca's ability to hunt.

Gabe Sheoships, Education Director at Friends of Tryon Creek, one of the participating Orca Recovery Day groups, explains: "The health and state of the orca today is a vast environmental indicator of how we are managing the entire region, and we should all be gravely concerned."

Alaska Airlines' #fillbeforeyoufly program is one example of how businesses are lending their voices to Promise the Pod. The airline has committed to planting one tree for every person who fills their reusable water bottle before a flight and shares their #fillbeforeyoufly photo. 6000 fliers have participated since September. This effort combines plastic waste reduction with habitat restoration to increase interest and awareness about orca decline. Partners on #fillbeforeyoufly include Bonneville Environmental Foundation, Miir bottle company and the nonprofit Lonely Whale. Employees from Alaska Airlines are also volunteering at an Orca Recovery Day event in Tacoma, WA.

"Our watersheds are a part of the Willamette River System which is part of the Columbia River System. What we do impacts watersheds up and down the West Coast. Our watersheds are reliant on healthy oceans to sustain a healthy salmon population. And if the ocean is healthy but the salmon can't get upstream or don't have places to rear or spawn, we still won't have salmon and the orca that feed on them." Says Neil Schulman, Executive Director at North Clackamas Watershed Council.

### What can you do?

Attend one of the five Oregon, or 80+ regional [Orca Recovery Day events](#) and lend a hand for orca. Activities range from river cleanups to weed removal and tree planting. If you can't attend in person, donate to Promise the Pod, and funds will go to on the ground restoration

When: Saturday, October 19, 2019. Most events run 9-12, but check the event calendar and be sure to register!

### About the Southern Residents:

These families of whales stay together for generations and have members that are over 90 years old. That means some of these treasured whales were swimming off British Columbia, along the West Coast and down to California as silent movies still flickered on screens, as Picasso and Matisse were painting their masterpieces, and as Billie Holiday was changing Jazz forever.

Today, the West Coast whales are the only segment of orcas listed under the Endangered Species Act. Recovery for the Southern Resident Orcas will take a coordinated and ongoing effort by all who reside in watersheds that provide habitat for the Orca's primary food source: Chinook salmon, which

are also endangered. Improving fish habitat will also benefit sport and commercial fisheries in B.C, Washington, Oregon and California, having an estimated economic impact of \$4.25 billion.

**Who:** All events are family-friendly and designed for anyone to volunteer in their local community. Event details and volunteer registration can be found at <http://betterground.org/ord/partner-events/> People who are unable to volunteer may consider a donation to support conservation efforts at [www.PromiseThePod.org](http://www.PromiseThePod.org).

**Interview Opportunities:**

Kirk Myers, Alaska Airlines; [kirk.myers@alaskaair.com](mailto:kirk.myers@alaskaair.com);

Allan Warren, Washington Lead for Orca Recovery Day; [AllanW@pierced.org](mailto:AllanW@pierced.org); 253-278-4320

Kas Guillozet, Bonneville Environmental Foundation and Promise the Pod; [kguillozet@b-e-f.org](mailto:kguillozet@b-e-f.org); 971-678-2605

There will be opportunities for video and photography of active volunteer activities in natural areas on October 19, 2019. Please contact Kas Guillozet at 971-678-2605 or [kguillozet@b-e-f.org](mailto:kguillozet@b-e-f.org) to support your reporting.

**For More Information:** Visit <http://betterground.org/ord/partner-events/> to find more detailed information on Orca Recovery Day activities. Visit [www.promisethepod.org](http://www.promisethepod.org) for more information about our initiative, an informative video by partner One Tree Planted, and how you can contribute.



● Orca Recovery Day Events

Chinook River Run Status

~ Endangered   
 ~ Threatened   
 ~ Good

Sources: The Seattle Times, NOAA, Esri, Natural Earth



Tree planting with North Clackamas Watersheds Council and Clackamas Parks and Recreation last winter at Spring Park in Clackamas County. On Orca Recovery Day they will be hosting an event at Olson Wetlands. Photo credit: @benhemmingsmedia (higher resolution images available upon request).

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