
SECOND SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5577

State of Washington

66th Legislature

2019 Regular Session

By Senate Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Rolfes, Frockt, Llias, McCoy, Dhingra, Hunt, Keiser, Kuderer, Saldaña, and Wilson, C.; by request of Office of the Governor)

READ FIRST TIME 03/01/19.

1 AN ACT Relating to the protection of southern resident orca
2 whales from vessels; amending RCW 77.15.740 and 43.384.050; adding
3 new sections to chapter 77.65 RCW; adding a new section to chapter
4 77.15 RCW; prescribing penalties; and declaring an emergency.

5 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

6 **Sec. 1.** RCW 77.15.740 and 2014 c 48 s 22 are each amended to
7 read as follows:

8 (1) Except as provided in subsection (2) of this section, it is
9 unlawful for a person to:

10 (a) Cause a vessel or other object to approach, in any manner,
11 within (~~two~~) three hundred yards of a southern resident orca whale;

12 (b) Position a vessel to be in the path of a southern resident
13 orca whale at any point located within four hundred yards of the
14 whale. This includes intercepting a southern resident orca whale by
15 positioning a vessel so that the prevailing wind or water current
16 carries the vessel into the path of the whale at any point located
17 within four hundred yards of the whale;

18 (c) Position a vessel behind a southern resident orca whale at
19 any point located within four hundred yards;

20 (d) Fail to disengage the transmission of a vessel that is within
21 (~~two~~) three hundred yards of a southern resident orca whale; (~~or~~

1 ~~(d))~~ (e) Cause a vessel or other object to exceed a speed
2 greater than seven knots over ground at any point located within one-
3 half nautical mile (one thousand thirteen yards) of a southern
4 resident orca whale; or

5 (f) Feed a southern resident orca whale.

6 (2) A person is exempt from subsection (1) of this section if
7 that person is:

8 (a) Operating a federal government vessel in the course of (~~his~~
9 ~~or her~~) official duties, or operating a state, tribal, or local
10 government vessel when engaged in official duties involving law
11 enforcement, search and rescue, or public safety;

12 (b) Operating a vessel in conjunction with a vessel traffic
13 service established under 33 C.F.R. and following a traffic
14 separation scheme, or complying with a vessel traffic service measure
15 of direction. This also includes support vessels escorting ships in
16 the traffic lanes, such as tug boats;

17 (c) Engaging in an activity, including scientific research,
18 pursuant to a permit or other authorization from the national marine
19 fisheries service and the department;

20 (d) Lawfully engaging in a treaty Indian or commercial fishery
21 that is actively setting, retrieving, or closely tending fishing
22 gear. Commercial fishing vessels in transit are not exempt from
23 subsection (1) of this section;

24 (e) Conducting vessel operations necessary to avoid an imminent
25 and serious threat to a person, vessel, or the environment, including
26 when necessary for overall safety of navigation and to comply with
27 state and federal navigation requirements; or

28 (f) Engaging in rescue or clean-up efforts of a beached southern
29 resident orca whale overseen, coordinated, or authorized by a
30 volunteer stranding network.

31 (3) For the purpose of this section, "vessel" includes aircraft
32 while on the surface of the water, and every description of
33 watercraft on the water that is used or capable of being used as a
34 means of transportation on the water. However, "vessel" does not
35 include inner tubes, air mattresses, sailboards, and small rafts, or
36 flotation devices or toys customarily used by swimmers.

37 (4) (a) A violation of this section is a natural resource
38 infraction punishable under chapter 7.84 RCW and carries a fine of
39 five hundred dollars, not including statutory assessments added
40 pursuant to RCW 3.62.090.

1 (b) A person who qualifies for an exemption under subsection (2)
2 of this section may offer that exemption as an affirmative defense,
3 which that person must prove by a preponderance of the evidence.

4 (5) The enforcement actions required of the department from this
5 section are subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for
6 this specific purpose.

7 NEW SECTION. Sec. 2. A new section is added to chapter 77.65
8 RCW to read as follows:

9 (1) A commercial whale watching license is required for
10 commercial whale watching operators. The annual fee is two hundred
11 dollars in addition to the annual application fee of seventy-five
12 dollars.

13 (2) The annual fees for a commercial whale watching license as
14 described in subsection (1) of this section must include fees for
15 each motorized or sailing vessel or vessels as follows:

16 (a) One to twenty-four passengers, three hundred twenty-five
17 dollars;

18 (b) Twenty-five to fifty passengers, five hundred twenty-five
19 dollars;

20 (c) Fifty-one to one hundred passengers, eight hundred twenty-
21 five dollars;

22 (d) One hundred one to one hundred fifty passengers, one thousand
23 eight hundred twenty-five dollars; and

24 (e) One hundred fifty-one passengers or greater, two thousand
25 dollars.

26 (3) The annual fees for a commercial whale watching license as
27 described in subsection (1) of this section must include fees for
28 each kayak as follows:

29 (a) One to ten kayaks, one hundred twenty-five dollars;

30 (b) Eleven to twenty kayaks, two hundred twenty-five dollars;

31 (c) Twenty-one to thirty kayaks, four hundred twenty-five
32 dollars; and

33 (d) Thirty-one or more kayaks, six hundred twenty-five dollars.

34 (4) The holder of a commercial whale watching license for
35 motorized or sailing vessels required under subsection (2) of this
36 section may substitute the vessel designated on the license, or
37 designate a vessel if none has previously been designated, if the
38 license holder:

39 (a) Surrenders the previously issued license to the department;

1 (b) Submits to the department an application that identifies the
2 currently designated vessel, the vessel proposed to be designated,
3 and any other information required by the department; and

4 (c) Pays to the department a fee of thirty-five dollars and an
5 application fee of one hundred five dollars.

6 (5) Unless the license holder owns all vessels identified on the
7 application described in subsection (4)(b) of this section, the
8 department may not change the vessel designation on the license more
9 than once per calendar year.

10 (6) A person who is not the license holder may operate a
11 motorized or sailing commercial whale watching vessel designated on
12 the license only if:

13 (a) The person holds an alternate operator license issued by the
14 director; and

15 (b) The person is designated as an alternate operator on the
16 underlying commercial whale watching license.

17 (7) No individual may hold more than one alternate operator
18 license. An individual who holds an alternate operator license may be
19 designated as an alternate operator on an unlimited number of
20 commercial whale watching licenses.

21 (8) The annual fee for an alternate operator license is two
22 hundred dollars in addition to an annual application fee of seventy-
23 five dollars.

24 (9) The definitions in this subsection apply throughout this
25 section unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

26 (a) "Commercial whale watching" means the act of taking, or
27 offering to take, passengers aboard a vessel in order to view marine
28 mammals in their natural habitat for a fee.

29 (b) "Commercial whale watching operators" includes commercial
30 vessels and kayak rentals that are engaged in the business of whale
31 watching.

32 (c) "Commercial whale watching vessel" means any vessel that is
33 being used as a means of transportation for individuals to engage in
34 commercial whale watching.

35 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** A new section is added to chapter 77.65
36 RCW to read as follows:

37 (1) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this
38 specific purpose, the department may adopt rules for holders of a
39 commercial whale watching license established in section 2 of this

1 act for the viewing of southern resident orca whales for the inland
2 waters of Washington by January 1, 2021. The rules must be designed
3 to reduce the daily and cumulative impacts on southern resident orca
4 whales and consider the economic viability of license holders. The
5 department shall at a minimum consider protections for southern
6 resident orca whales by establishing limitations on:

7 (a) The number of commercial whale watching operators that may
8 view southern resident orca whales at one time;

9 (b) The number of days and hours that commercial whale watching
10 operators can operate;

11 (c) The duration spent in the vicinity of southern resident orca
12 whales; and

13 (d) The areas in which commercial whale watching operators may
14 operate.

15 (2) The department may phase in requirements, but must adopt
16 rules to implement this section. The department may consider the use
17 of an automatic identification system to enable effective monitoring
18 and compliance.

19 (3) The department may phase in requirements, but must adopt
20 rules pursuant to chapter 34.05 RCW to implement this section
21 including public, industry, and interested party involvement.

22 (4) Before January 1, 2021, the department shall convene an
23 independent panel of scientists to review the current body of best
24 available science regarding impacts to southern resident orcas by
25 small vessels and commercial whale watching due to disturbance and
26 noise. The department must use the best available science in the
27 establishment of the southern resident orca whale watching rules and
28 continue to adaptively manage the program using the most current and
29 best available science.

30 (5) The department shall complete an analysis and report to the
31 governor and the legislature on the effectiveness of and any
32 recommendations for changes to the whale watching rules, license fee
33 structure, and approach distance rules by November 30, 2022, and
34 every two years thereafter until 2026. This report must be in
35 compliance with RCW 43.01.036.

36 (6) The definitions in this subsection apply throughout this
37 section unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

38 (a) "Commercial whale watching" has the same meaning as defined
39 in section 2 of this act.

1 (b) "Commercial whale watching operators" has the same meaning as
2 defined in section 2 of this act.

3 (c) "Inland waters of Washington" means Puget Sound and related
4 inland marine waters, including all salt waters of the state of
5 Washington inside the international boundary line between Washington
6 and British Columbia, and lying east of the junction of the Pacific
7 Ocean and the Strait of Juan de Fuca, and the rivers and streams
8 draining to Puget Sound as mapped by water resource inventory areas 1
9 through 19 in WAC 173-500-040 as it exists on July 1, 2007.

10 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** A new section is added to chapter 77.15
11 RCW to read as follows:

12 (1) A person is guilty of unlawfully engaging in commercial whale
13 watching in the second degree if the person:

14 (a) Does not have and possess all licenses and permits required
15 under this title; or

16 (b) Violates any department rule regarding the operation of a
17 commercial whale watching vessel near a southern resident orca whale.

18 (2) A person is guilty of engaging in commercial whale watching
19 in the first degree if the person commits the act described in
20 subsection (1) of this section and the violation occurs within one
21 year of the date of a prior conviction under this section.

22 (3)(a) Unlawful commercial whale watching in the second degree is
23 a misdemeanor.

24 (b) Unlawful commercial whale watching in the first degree is a
25 gross misdemeanor. Upon conviction, the director shall deny
26 applications submitted by the person for a commercial whale watching
27 license or alternate operator license for two years from the date of
28 conviction.

29 **Sec. 5.** RCW 43.384.050 and 2018 c 275 s 6 are each amended to
30 read as follows:

31 (1) From amounts appropriated to the department for the authority
32 and from other moneys available to it, the authority may incur
33 expenditures for any purpose specifically authorized by this chapter
34 including:

35 (a) Entering into a contract for a multiple year statewide
36 tourism marketing plan with a statewide nonprofit organization
37 existing on June 7, 2018, whose sole purpose is marketing Washington
38 to tourists. The marketing plan must include, but is not limited to,

1 focuses on rural tourism-dependent counties, natural wonders and
2 outdoor recreation opportunities of the state, including sustainable
3 whale watching, attraction of international tourists, identification
4 of local offerings for tourists, and assistance for tourism areas
5 adversely impacted by natural disasters. In the event that no such
6 organization exists on June 7, 2018, or the initial contractor ceases
7 to exist, the authority may determine criteria for a contractor to
8 carry out a statewide marketing program;

9 (b) Contracting for the evaluation of the impact of the statewide
10 tourism marketing program; and

11 (c) Paying for administrative expenses of the authority, which
12 may not exceed two percent of the state portion of funds collected in
13 any fiscal year.

14 (2) All nonstate moneys received by the authority under RCW
15 43.384.060 or otherwise provided to the authority for purposes of
16 matching funding must be deposited in the authority's private local
17 account created under RCW 43.384.020(4) and are held in trust for
18 uses authorized solely by this chapter.

19 (3) "Sustainable whale watching" means an experience that
20 includes whale watching from land or aboard a vessel that reduces the
21 impact on whales, provides a recreational and educational experience,
22 and motivates participants to care about marine mammals, the sea, and
23 marine conservation.

24 NEW SECTION. Sec. 6. Section 1 of this act is necessary for the
25 immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or
26 support of the state government and its existing public institutions,
27 and takes effect immediately.

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