

WAC 220-460-130 Nonmotorized commercial whale watching vessels.

(1) Tours involving any nonmotorized watercraft used for the purposes of commercial whale watching, such as kayaks, are subject to these requirements. Such watercraft constitute commercial whale watching vessels and are referred to as "vessels" in this chapter.

(2) Operators must prevent all vessels in their tour group from disturbing southern resident killer whales. All vessels in the tour group must adhere to the following requirements:

(a) It is unlawful to launch if southern resident killer whales are within one-half nautical mile of the launch location.

(b) Vessels are prohibited from being paddled, positioned, or waiting in the path of a southern resident killer whale. If a southern resident killer whale is moving towards a vessel, the vessel must immediately be moved out of the path of the whale.

(c) If a vessel or vessels inadvertently encounter a southern resident killer whale, they must immediately be moved as close to shore as possible and secured, or be rafted up close to shore or in a kelp bed, and paddling shall cease until any and all killer whales have moved to at least four hundred yards away from the vessels. Rafting up is defined as manually holding vessels close together, maintaining a tight grouping.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 77.12.047, 77.65.615, 77.65.620, 77.15.020, 77.15.160, 77.04.012, 77.04.55 [74.05.055]. WSR 21-01-216 (Order 20-264), § 220-460-130, filed 12/23/20, effective 1/23/21.]