

March 15, 2022

The Honorable Rick Larsen  
United States House of Representatives  
2113 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

**Re: Support for HR 6987: reducing underwater noise impacts to marine mammals**

Dear Representative Larsen,

The Port of Seattle enthusiastically supports your introduction of HR 6987, which would establish programs to reduce the impacts of vessel traffic and underwater noise on marine mammals. In particular, we deeply appreciate the legislation's grant assistance to seaports for activities that measurably reduce impacts to marine mammals from port operations.

As you know, the Puget Sound is home to both a thriving maritime industry as well as marine mammal species important to our region's cultural identity and ecosystem - including the endangered population of Southern Resident Killer Whales (SRKW). The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) identified underwater noise as one of the top 3 threats to the recovery of these orcas. For that reason, the Port of Seattle – in partnership with the Northwest Seaport Alliance, Port of Tacoma, the State of Washington, Tribes, and other organizations – established the Quiet Sound program, housed within local nonprofit Washington Maritime Blue. This collaborative initiative aims to develop projects that measurably reduce the impacts of underwater noise on SRKWs.

Like the pilot program to develop a mitigation project for large whales proposed in section 3 of the bill, Quiet Sound is developing a monitoring program to communicate the presence of SRKWs and other whale species to commercial vessels in near real-time. Key to the success of these efforts is to enable mariners to use a signal portal to access whale sighting information from a variety of reliable sources. However, to do so requires collaboration between diverse stakeholders as well as the development of innovative technologies that can integrate with the existing Cooperative Vessel Traffic Management System operated by the US and Canadian Coast Guards. We appreciate the inclusion of the grant opportunities described in Section 1 of the bill that can aid in the development of such capabilities.

We look forward to meeting with your staff in the coming days to discussing how we can fully integrate our work with the goals and programs proposed in H.R. 6987. Thank you again for your leadership on this important topic, and we look forward to working with you to advance this legislation as part of our ongoing efforts to enable commerce and killer whales to coexist.

Sincerely,



Commissioner Fred Felleman



Port of Seattle

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