



Animal Welfare Institute

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The Honorable Bruce Westerman
Chairman
House Natural Resources Committee
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Jared Huffman
Ranking Member
House Natural Resources Committee
1332 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Harriet Hageman
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife,
and Fisheries
1331 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Val Hoyle
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife,
and Fisheries
1331 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

July 24, 2025

Dear Chairman Westerman, Ranking Member Huffman, Chairwoman Hageman, and Ranking Member Hoyle,

On behalf of our thousands of members and supporters, the Animal Welfare Institute (AWI) respectfully requests that AWI's testimony on the Washington State bill, House Joint Memorial 4004 (HJM 4004), be included in the official hearing record. We understand that the Subcommittee previously added HJM 4004 itself to the record; therefore, we believe it is important to also note that the bill ultimately did not advance.

The inclusion of this updated context will ensure a more comprehensive understanding of the legislative history and the broader implications for marine conservation.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and for your ongoing commitment to protecting our nation's wildlife. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require additional information.

Sincerely,

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Animal Welfare Institute
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**Testimony Submitted on Behalf of the Animal Welfare Institute to the House Committee
on Agriculture and Natural Resources Regarding
House Joint Memorial 4004
February 21, 2025**

On behalf of our supporters in Washington State, the Animal Welfare Institute (AWI) appreciates the opportunity to submit testimony regarding HJM 4004. We strongly urge the House to vote no on this memorial.

Now more than ever the US Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) is needed to ensure marine mammal populations—even those currently doing well—can withstand the threats they and their habitats increasingly face, including pollution, coastal development, increased shipping traffic, oil spills, fisheries entanglement, and climate change. HJM 4004 requests the federal government to weaken this landmark law to allow more “flexibility” for managers to use adaptive management tools, including lethal removal, of pinnipeds seen to threaten endangered salmon stocks.

However, pinnipeds are natural predators in the Columbia River basin, while salmon in this ecosystem face many threats, of which pinnipeds are only a minor one. HJM 4004 ignores this multitude of threats and scapegoats pinnipeds instead. Nonnative fish that were stocked for sport fishing, such as bass and walleye pike, eat many young salmon a year, compete with salmon for food and habitat, and can transmit diseases to salmon. Additionally, courts have found that the river’s water quality and flow management are inadequate for salmon wellbeing. Ultimately, industrial fisheries remove far more salmon than pinnipeds could ever do.

Prior to the enactment of the MMPA, pinniped populations in US waters, and particularly on the west coast, had declined to hazardously low levels. The eventual success of the MMPA in restoring some pinniped populations to their historic levels is to be celebrated. Removing or weakening this statute’s protections after it has proven successful is counterproductive and short-sighted and virtually guarantees that, in the near future, once again pinniped populations will decline to the point where they are no longer functional elements of their ecosystems.

The MMPA already allows lethal removal of pinnipeds in the Columbia River basin as a management tool to protect salmon. Until additional effort is made to restore salmon—such as strategic dam and culvert removals, reduced fishery quotas, and extensive restoration of salmon spawning grounds—increased “flexibility” to lethally remove pinnipeds should not be considered.

We thank you for the opportunity to make our concerns known.

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