

NEWSLETTER OF THE PUGET SOUND CHAPTER  
OF THE AMERICAN CETACEAN SOCIETY

VOLUME 8, ISSUE 1

WINTER 2007

**Coming Speaker Series events:**

- **Wed April 18th**  
speaker TBA
- **Wed. May 16**  
Paul Watson,  
founder of Sea Shepard
- **Wed. June 20**  
Amanda Bradford, U.W.  
Natural History & conservation  
status of western gray whales.

**Event Information**

All speaker series events meet on the 3rd Wednesday of the month at the Phinney Neighborhood Center, Room 6, 6532 Phinney Ave. N., Seattle, (just north of the Woodland Park Zoo).

Doors open at 7pm and the program starts at 7:30pm. Plenty of free parking is available in the upper and lower parking lots. Admission is free—donations to offset the room rental costs are gratefully appreciated of course as we operate on a shoestring like almost all nonprofits.

**Inside...**

Sound Science .....2  
Economics of Lower Snake  
River Dam Removal.....3,5  
Iceland Whale Hunting—Why?.....4,5  
VHP—A Gift from the SRKW... ..5  
Killer Whale Pod of Many Nations..6  
2006 Conference Review .....7

**Chapter Currents**

*by Uko Gorter, ACS/PS President*

As the American Cetacean Society is entering its 40<sup>th</sup> year, our organization finds itself at the threshold of a new era. Up until now, ACS has functioned with paid administrative assistants and a working board of directors.

At the annual board meeting in February, the ACS national reached a decision to hire an Executive Director to take ACS in a new exciting direction, as well as put a new “face” on our organization. While the Executive Director will work closely

with the board of directors, he or she is expected to set the new course of our organization, maintain chapter relations, and be in charge of administrative duties.

An announcement and application was posted on the ACS national site (and is still up for reference). Additional announcements and advertisements were made at all chapter meetings, on MARMAM, other listserves, and in selected newspapers. Interviews are in progress.

**Baiji declared “functionally extinct”  
on December 13, 2006**

An international expedition to search for a rare Chinese river dolphin has ended without a single sighting, and researchers said Wednesday that the aquatic mammal is facing imminent extinction.

A few of the white Yangtze River dolphins, known as baiji, may still exist in the massive waterway that cuts through eastern China, but their numbers are insufficient to stave off extinction, said August Pfluger, the Swiss co-leader of the expedition.

"We have to accept the fact that the

Baiji is functionally extinct. We lost the race," Pfluger said in a statement released by the expedition. "It is a tragedy, a loss not only for China, but for the entire world. We are all incredibly sad."

The baiji, shy and nearly blind, is one of the world's oldest dolphin species, dating back some 20 million years. Scientists believe their disappearance would be the first instance of a large aquatic mammal being driven to extinction since hunting killed off the Caribbean monk seal circa 1952.

*(Continued on page 2)*



## Sound Science: Presenting an Ecosystem View of Puget Sound

On January 16, 2007, eleven regional collaborators including government agencies, non-profits, and academia presented Washington State Governor Christine Gregoire with a report entitled Sound Science. This document is unique in that it takes an ecosystem view of the Puget Sound and will provide a framework for ongoing recovery efforts including the Governor's own initiative to help restore Puget Sound by 2020 (see *Whulj* volume 7, issue 1).

The report consists of five sections: Problems and Opportunities for Puget Sound, Management of Puget Sound on an ecosystem scale, The Puget Sound Ecosystem: Changing ecological and human components, The Future of Puget Sound, and the Key Findings.

This report is a great reference for all of us that care about the future of Puget Sound and all the wildlife that call it home. It is available online from the Northwest Fisheries Science Center's website: [http://www.nwfsc.noaa.gov/events/workshops/science\\_symposium/documents/soundscience2007.pdf](http://www.nwfsc.noaa.gov/events/workshops/science_symposium/documents/soundscience2007.pdf)

### **Baiji** (continued from page 1)

Overfishing and shipping traffic, whose engines interfere with the sonar the baiji uses to navigate and feed, are likely the main reasons for the mammal's declining numbers, Pfluger said. Though the Yangtze is polluted, water samples taken by the expedition every 50 kilometers (30 miles) did not show high concentrations of toxic substances, the statement said. For nearly six weeks, Pfluger's team of 30 scientists scoured a heavily trafficked 1,700-kilometer (1,000-mile) stretch of the Yangtze, where the baiji once thrived. The expedition's two boats, equipped with high-tech binoculars and underwater microphones, trailed each other an hour apart without radio contact so that a sighting by one vessel would not prejudice the other.

Around 400 baiji were believed to be living in the Yangtze in the 1980s. The last full-fledged search, in 1997, yielded 13 confirmed sightings, and a fisherman claimed to have seen a baiji in 2004, Pfluger said in an earlier interview. At least 20 to 25 baiji would now be needed to give the species a chance to survive, the group's statement said citing Wang Ding, a hydrobiologist and China's foremost campaigner for the baiji.

Sources: China Daily and Baiji.org

*Whulj*  
"the saltwater we know"

The Newsletter of  
the Puget Sound Chapter  
of the American Cetacean Society



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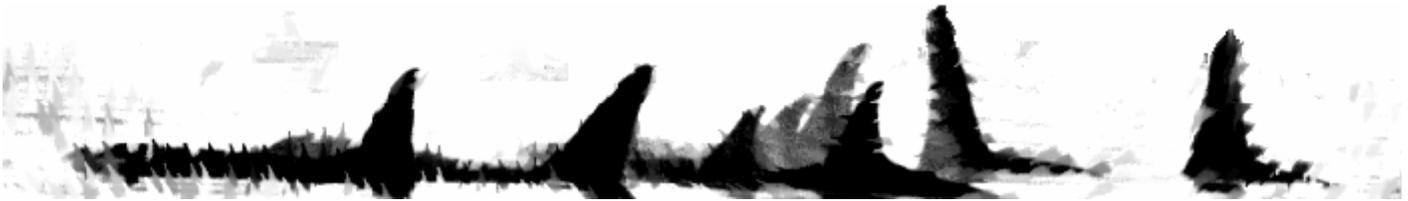
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submissions, comments, suggestions, and questions welcomed



## New Economic Report Looks at Lower Snake River Dam Removal By the Numbers.

By Darcie Larson, Save Our Wild Salmon Associate Director and ACS Puget Sound Board Member

With the listing of the Southern Resident orca population as endangered under Federal law, attention is being focused on what can be done to recover these whales. Number two on the list of five recommended actions in NOAA Fisheries' Orca Recovery Plan is "support salmon restoration". Did you know that the largest salmon-producing river system on earth was once the Columbia and Snake Rivers? Historically up to 16 million salmon returned to spawn each year, yet now only about 1 million fish return, and most of these are hatchery produced fish rather than wild spawners. If we are going to save the Southern Resident orcas from extinction, it is critical to bring back as many wild salmon as we possibly can. The loss of Columbia/Snake salmon was identified as probably having the largest impact on prey availability for the orcas in the Recovery Plan. Columbia and Snake Chinook are likely particularly critical to the orcas, as recent studies show the Southern Resident's preference for these large, fatty fish. Upper Snake River Chinook runs must migrate up to 900 miles from the ocean and gain 6,000 feet in elevation, a feat which requires very large fat stores.

### How can we restore Columbia and Snake salmon?

For years, scientists have told us clearly that removing four out-dated dams on the Lower Snake River will be needed to restore healthy, abundant populations of wild salmon and steelhead. Misinformation about the costs and benefits of this recovery option, however, have helped stall discussions in the region about developing a truly effective plan that will work for our endangered salmon and our Northwest communities. A new report released in November is helping to change the conversation. *Revenue Stream*, a forward-looking economic analysis explores the costs and benefits of removing the four Lower Snake River dams in order to recover wild salmon and steelhead. An unique coalition that includes the Pacific Coast Federation of Fisherman's Associations, Taxpayers for Common Sense, Republicans for Environmental Protection, NW Energy Coalition, and others, have compiled the best available information to build a strong case that removing these four dams will cost less and provide greater benefits than today's failed approach of the federal government.

### The Bottom Line: dam removal means lower costs and greater benefits.

Revenue Stream demonstrates the huge burden borne by regional ratepayers and national taxpayers for an expen-

sive failed federal salmon program. Federal Columbia Basin salmon "recovery" efforts with the four lower Snake River dams in place today costs about \$600 million per year. Despite these exorbitant costs, the plan remains inadequate. In 2005, for the fourth time in twelve years, a federal court ruled it illegal, and ordered it rewritten.

When combining the expected costs of recovery with the required costs of maintaining and operating these dams, Revenue Stream finds the total cost of recovery with the four dams in place at \$8-9 billion over the next ten years and \$16-18 billion over twenty years. However, the total costs associated with dam removal are significantly less – the replacement of the dams' current services with alternatives range from \$6-9 billion over the next ten years and \$11-16 billion over a twenty year period. The result a net savings for ratepayers and taxpayers of between \$1-4 billion.

### Replacing the energy, transportation, and irrigation.

Revenue Stream's analysis focuses on both the costs of dam removal and also the cost of replacing the limited benefits that the dams currently provide – energy, transportation, and irrigation. These dams currently produce only 5% of the power for the Pacific Northwest. In addition, many Snake River basin farmers currently rely on a barge transport system on the dams' reservoirs to move products along the river. Finally, the reservoir behind Ice Harbor Dam provides irrigation water to 13 farms. Revenue Stream's analysis includes the costs of replacing the dams' energy with clean, renewable sources, upgrading rail service in eastern Washington and offsetting increased shipping rates, and adapting the irrigation system to keep farmers growing.

### And the benefits?

If you're a hungry orca whale, the benefit of restoring abundant salmon and steelhead is pretty obvious. But its useful to point out that in addition to reduced total costs, Revenue Stream finds that removal will also provide far greater economic benefits than today's failed efforts. 140 miles of free-flowing river and healthy and abundant salmon and steelhead runs will benefit coastal and river communities as a result of increased recreational activities and tourism. Anticipated benefits to the Pacific Northwest are expected to range between \$9.1 and \$10.5 billion over

(Continued on page 5)

## Iceland Whale Hunting: Why?

By Bonnie Gretz

In 1998, I went on a wonderful whale watching trip to Iceland. The country is beautiful and the whales magnificent. We saw orcas, blue whales, humpbacks, minke and Atlantic white-sided dolphins. The people were warm and friendly, but when we said why we were visiting their country--to see whales--some said, "oh yes, we will start to hunt whales again soon." They were very puzzled when we emphatically stated that under no circumstances would visitors like us come to Iceland if they were hunting whales!

Unfortunately, on October 17, 2006, the government of Iceland announced that it would commercially hunt whales for the first time in more than two decades, granting permits for the taking of 30 minke whales and nine fin whales. Fin whales, second only to the blue whale in size, are listed as "endangered" by the World Conservation Union (IUCN).

However, whale conservationists around the world continue to gather information that makes us wonder why the government of Iceland continues with the hunt.

Even back in 2003, when the Icelandic government began to contemplate the resumption of whaling, the Icelandic Tourism Industry Association (ITIA, which represents about 80-90 percent of Iceland's tourism industry and includes its main airline Icelandair) issued a strong warning against any resumption of whaling, stating: "Whale-watching has become one of the most popular tourist activities in Iceland, providing considerable income for the economy, as well as creating a very positive image for Iceland".

Whale watching has been much more valuable to Iceland than whaling. The annual value of scientific whaling from 1985 to 1989 (the last time Iceland went whaling) was an estimated \$3-4 million. But a study says income from whale-watching and the benefits it generated in 2002 was more than \$16 million, with a predicted 100,000 whale watchers in 2007. Since there has been a big drop off in tourism because of the whale hunts, this prediction has not been fulfilled.

Not only are the tourists keeping their dollars out of Ice-

land, the meat from the hunted minke whales, approximately 220 tons, have been stockpiled in Reykjavik since October 2006. In a statement issued Jan. 24, 2007, Greenpeace spokesman Frode Pleyms said, "The Icelandic market has not proved to be what whalers expected. Domestic demand (for whale meat) was not what it was 20 years ago. People are choosing alternatives...The market is proving it (whaling) doesn't make any sense."

This meat was to be exported to Japan after toxicology tests were done and an import license issued from Tokyo. Contrary to any logic, in January, the Japanese whaling fleet was hunting for 10 fin whales and 935 minke whales in the Southern Ocean Whale Sanctuary, despite having massive stockpiles of its own of more than 4400 tons of unsold whale meat in freezers in Japan.



Brave minke whale swimming in Icelandic Waters  
photo courtesy Bonnie Gretz

Despite worldwide opposition, Iceland killed seven endangered fin whales and one minke whale at the end of last year, before the hunt was postponed due to bad weather. The Fisheries Ministry says Iceland intends to take a total of 30 minke whales and nine fin whales for commercial purposes, in addition to another 39 for "science" research, by

September 2007.

Iceland and Norway both openly defy a global moratorium on commercial whaling, approved in 1986 by the International Whaling Commission (IWC).

Some good news is that several Iceland businesses are publicly stating their opposition to the government's policy on whale hunting. The Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society has been actively campaigning against Iceland's resumption of whaling, and has been negotiating with these corporations.

In early February, WDCA announced that the Bauger Group—a major Icelandic investment company, announced its opposition. The Bauger Group emphasizes that their opposition is strictly for commercial reasons, in that they believe it will hurt their bottom line. The Exist

*(Continued on page 5)*



## Vashon Hydrophone Project Update: A Well-Timed Gift from the Southern Residents

By Ann Stateler, VHP Coordinator

The Vashon Hydrophone Project (VHP) recorded Southern Resident killer whales (SRKW) from a considerable distance several times during the fall/winter season in Central Puget Sound, but overall visits to our area decreased significantly from the previous season. In 2006, J Pod was conspicuously absent from Vashon-Maury Island waters, with no documented sightings the entire year. VHP associate Mark Sears and I observed that chum salmon were not abundant in local waters this fall. We surmise that the SRKW traveled to better feeding grounds elsewhere. Indeed, in late January 2007, K Pod members K20 (Spock) and her calf K38 (Comet) were photographed among a group of about 15 orcas near San Francisco.

The VHP is especially proud of a sighting we obtained in

challenging conditions the day after the Big Windstorm trashed Puget Sound. Like millions of people, we lost electricity during the night of December 14, 2006. As I surveyed wind damage on the morning of the 15<sup>th</sup>, I gazed out at Colvos Pass and saw something miraculous in the two-foot chop: dorsal fins! Our hydrophone has a battery backup, so with shivering fingers I fumbled to turn it on just in time to hear the calls of K Pod and the L12's as they traveled north at a fast clip. Call us "The Little Hydrophone Project That Could."

This exquisite orca encounter lifted the spirits of fellow tenants in our frigid building who persevered through the worst of the storm. The killer whales were a welcome reminder of why we love the Salish Sea despite occasional fierce outbursts from Mother Nature.

### New Economic Report looks at Lower Snake Dam Removal by the Numbers

(continued from page 3)  
ten years.

#### It's time for Congress to act.

Revenue Stream compiles the best available information and concludes that removing the four lower Snake River dams and replacing their limited benefits with alternatives makes the most economic sense. But the report's information isn't perfect. Congress needs to get involved and make sure all the facts are on the table – updating numbers and filling any gaps in the data. This should be the first crucial step toward greater Congressional engagement to understand the issues and help craft a plan that truly restores wild salmon and steelhead to the Columbia and Snake Rivers.

The bottom line is clear. It is time for our leaders in Congress to step up and take an honest look at removing the four Lower Snake River dams. [Act now by urging your representatives to support congressional studies exploring federal Columbia Basin recovery efforts and the real costs and benefits of removing the lower Snake River dams.](#)

To read the full text of the report go to:  
[http://www.wildsalmon.org/library\\_files/revenuestream8.pdf](http://www.wildsalmon.org/library_files/revenuestream8.pdf)

To send your Congressional leaders a message urging them to study the economics of salmon recovery and the lower Snake River dams, go to: <http://ga0.org/campaign/revenuestream>

### Iceland Whale Hunting—Why?

(continued from page 4)

Corporation, a major stakeholder in Iceland's largest bank and the largest shareholder in Bakkavor Group (a large UK food provider), as well as the largest shareholder in Iceland Telecom, has recently raised public concerns about this policy. Per Lydur Gudmunsson, Executive Chairman, said commercial whaling is "a fiasco, and Erlendur Hjaltason, CEO, stated that the decision to resume whaling was "ill-advised" and has had a negative impact

on Iceland's image and interests.

So the question remains, in the face of strong public and corporate disapproval, a significant impact to the country's image and tourism value, why does Iceland still hunt whales?

Sources: Whale & Dolphin Conservation Society,  
Agence France-Presse



## Killer Whale Pod of Many Nations: “Carving for a Greater Cause”

By Ann Stateler

“Carving for a Greater Cause” is how the Potlatch Fund’s Justin Finkbonner described Tlingit artist Odin Lonning’s work in an article for their Spring ’07 newsletter ([www.potlatchfund.org](http://www.potlatchfund.org)). On January 25, the Seattle Aquarium hosted a public dedication of Odin’s panel, *Killer Whale Pod of Many Nations*. The seven-foot-long red cedar carving of five killer whales in five Northwest Coast Native art styles is a tribute to endangered orcas and Coastal tribes from Puget Sound to Alaska.

The audience of about 150 included First Nations, Aquarium patrons, Odin’s art clients, whale researchers, conservationists, and Vashon Islanders. Aquarium director John Braden praised the panel at the ribbon-cutting ceremony in the Puget Sound Orcas Family Activity Center, where *Killer Whale Pod of Many Nations* will serve as a teaching tool.

With our “portable pod” of formline orcas -- fin drum, button robe, and cutout whale – Odin and I did a presentation in the Life on the Edge Exhibit area. Our dear friend Sweetwater, who is Killer Whale Clan, donned her gorgeous killer whale regalia to join us for an honor song and dance. After the song and a bit of Tlingit oratory, we described the inspiration for *Killer Whale Pod of Many Nations*.

The designs in the five whales portray traditional and contemporary themes that symbolize the enduring bond between First Nations and killer whales. From left to right, the whales exemplify Tlingit, Haida, Nuu-chah-nulth, Kwakwaka’wakw, and Coast Salish motifs.

The Tlingit whale denotes how a crest originates in the story of *Natsiclané, or Creation of the Killer Whale*. The Haida whale embodies two stories about the *Raven-Finned Killer Whale* and the adventures of *Nanasimgit and His Wife*. The Nuu-chah-nulth whale signifies the timeless wolf-killer whale connection in their culture and commemorates Tsux’it (Luna).

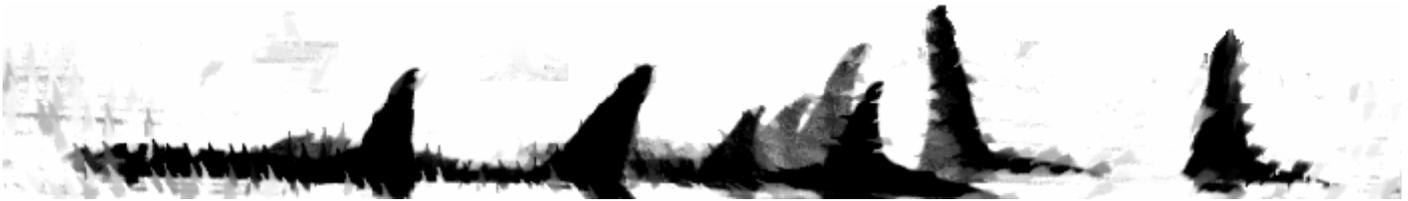
The Kwakwaka’wakw whale celebrates the triumphant reunion of Keetla (Springer) with her pod in Namgis First Nation territory in British Columbia. A vocal delegation of “Springer’s Peeps” cheered enthusiastically for this whale, which shows Springer spyhopping. The Coast Salish whale pays homage to the Indigenous peoples and Southern Resident orcas of the Salish Sea.

We are deeply grateful to the Seattle Aquarium and the Potlatch Fund’s Native Arts Grant Program for supporting *Killer Whale Pod of Many Nations*. John Braden, Tim Kuniholm, Becky Bingham, and Michael Darling of the Aquarium were tremendously helpful. Margarite Hargrave made a fabulous interpretive plaque to accompany the panel.

Northwest Coast Native art by Native artists is lacking on the ancestral Duwamish land of Seattle’s waterfront. Odin’s panel aims to instill Native Pride and educate the public about the richness and complexity of Coastal art and cultures. Meeting wild orcas fifteen years ago initially sparked the idea for a lasting Indigenous tribute to them. *Killer Whale Pod of Many Nations* is a manifestation of our endless love and appreciation for the orcas who enrich our lives immeasurably.



Killer Whale Pod of Many Nations—by Odin Lonning (<http://www.odinlonning.com>)



## 2006 ACS CONFERENCE REVIEW

by Uko Gorter

Did we turn the wrong way? Darkness had already set in, and there was a slight chill in the air. Luckily it did not rain. Then we noticed the flickering of a flashlight. A human silhouette attached to it directed us to a pathway. Before long, we found ourselves drawn to a long row of paper lanterns. Like an airport taxiway, it guided us along, through the dunes, towards an ersatz tropical beach setting where we were greeted with a Hawaiian lei. Torches lit a barbecue buffet and bar and rattan beach mats served as seating on the soft sand. Once everyone had food and drink in hand, the much anticipated Polynesian dance show commenced. Hula girls of different ages, performed wonderful dances from different island regions. Their warm infectious smiles did not reveal a hint of being cold, despite their skimpy outfits. The dancers were accompanied by their oversized artistic leader, who, in between drumming, delivered commentary and a dose of standard touristy humor. The apotheosis included, a potentially embarrassing, audience participation. But few seemed to mind, especially after a few drinks.

With that, the American Cetacean Society kicked off its Tenth International Conference, “Whales Without Borders”, in Ventura, California. This time however, ACS partnered up with the Channel Island National Marine Sanctuary, CINMS; a partnership, that just seemed to make sense all around.

As in previous ACS conferences, the format with speakers, art show, photo contest, and poster sessions was maintained. Also, a whale watch field trip was offered on Friday. As in 2004, the Condor Express was up to the task.

While the trip did not yield any large baleen whales, their toothed cousins did not disappoint. Bottlenose dolphins (both coastal and offshore forms), long and short-beaked common dolphins, as well as Risso’s dolphins made an appearance. The latter showing an unusual behavior of rolling over each other that even puzzled our naturalist, Alisa Schulman-Janiger. But, she alluded to a similar event she had once witnessed that included a birthing. So, we were left wondering. What if?

All in all, it was a great day on the water. Condor Express owner Fred Benko, who received the 2006 ACS/LA Whale Hero Award, and crew is to be commended for their professionalism and commitment to ACS.

This year’s banquet speaker was non-other than photographer Charles “Flip” Nicklin, of National Geographic fame, back by popular demand. Flip’s great story telling coupled with his amazing photography held the audience spellbound, just like at the 2002 Seattle Conference. Plus, to the delight of all eleven photo-contestants, Flip agreed to judge the 70 or so wonderful images.

By all accounts this years line up of speakers and presentations was one of the best ever. Also, more time was given to speakers and to meaningful discussions afterwards. The audience responded and became more involved, and wonderful conversations continued during coffee and lunch breaks where researchers mixed with conference attendees.

Speakers like Hal Whitehead, Scott Baker, Douglas Chadwick, Donald Croll, Joseph Geraci, David Matilla, Mark Johnson, Naomi Rose, Micheal Parfit, Paul Wade, and of course our own Jon Stern and Mason Weinrich, gave the conference an air of importance and excellence. Their presentations ranged from “The rise of scientific whaling” to studies of humpback whales and North Pacific right whales, as well the tragic story of “Luna”. Almost all speakers touched on the apt conference theme of cetacean borders. A list of speakers is on the national site.

Of course, I would be remiss not to mention the art show. I was pleased to see some artists of the previous conference. It was good to see sculptor James “Bud” Bottoms and painter Olie Thompson again. Their artistic talents are outstanding. We were also fortunate to have Peggy Oki grace us with her presence and her beautiful art. Yours truly, was present with his laminated field guides of marine mammals.

Sharing wall space with the artists was a veritable collection of international research posters. Some came all the way from Denmark and Japan. Topics spanned the range from “White-beaked dolphin movements around Iceland”, by Tetley et al., to “A Collaborative Approach to Trans-Border Whale Watching”, by Anna and Chris Hall.

I urge all of you who have not been to one of our conferences, to do so. It is not only fun to meet fellow ACS members and cetacean lovers, it is an incredible inspiring and motivating experience. Or even better yet, get actively involved with ACS and help!

# AMERICAN CETACEAN SOCIETY



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## SAVE THE DATE—Wednesday April 18th

Please join us at 7pm at the Phinney Neighborhood Center, Room 6 (just north of Woodland Park Zoo)



Photo courtesy Mark Sears © 2002 All Rights Reserved

***PLEASE JOIN US — SAY “YES!” — ENROLL ME AS A MEMBER OF THE PUGET SOUND CHAPTER OF THE AMERICAN CETACEAN SOCIETY!”***

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