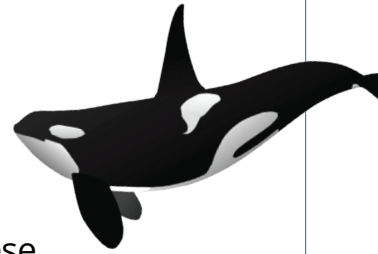


No buffer left: Southern Residents face too many threats



Southern Resident killer whales struggle with too little food, too much noise and too many toxic contaminants.^{[1][2]} A federal review found that the Roberts Bank port expansion (RBT2) near Vancouver would add to these pressures through more underwater noise, ship strike risk and impacts to Fraser River salmon.^[3] Now, an oil tanker terminal is also proposed at Roberts Bank.^[4] For these endangered whales, every added pressure makes recovery harder.^[5]

-1%

Southern Resident killer whales are projected to decline at an average of 1% per year under existing levels of underwater noise, salmon and pollution.^[6] Reducing these threats can support their recovery; adding new ports and tankers could put it further out of reach.

Fewer salmon. Less food.

- ✓ Chinook salmon are the whales' main prey, but they have declined in size and numbers.^[7]
- ✓ Recovery depends on whales finding enough salmon throughout the year.^[8]
- ✓ The federal review panel expects RBT2 to harm Chinook salmon, adding to the cumulative stress on Southern Residents.^[9]

Ship noise makes finding food harder

- ✓ Southern Residents need to hear the sound of their echolocation clicks to hunt for prey.^[10]
- ✓ Underwater noise can drown out their clicks and calls. This makes it harder for whales to catch the prey they need.^[11]
- ✓ As ship noise gets louder, Southern Residents are more likely to stop feeding.^[12]
- ✓ Quiet time for the whales is important, and it is declining. From 2017 to 2025, summer vessel noise in Boundary Pass reduced their listening space by more than 80%.^[13]

Pollution, spills & ship strikes can kill

- ✓ Southern Residents are already among the world's most contaminated whales.^[14]
- ✓ Long-lasting pollutants build up in milk and fat.^[15]
- ✓ Oil spills harm whales when they inhale fumes or eat contaminated prey.^[16]
- ✓ 22 killer whales died after exposure to the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill.^[17]
- ✓ Ship strikes can be lethal. Southern Residents Sooke (L112), Luna (L98) and Doublestuff (J34) all died from 'blunt force trauma' collisions.^{[18][19]}

RBT2's review panel was blunt

- ✓ More ships and loss of salmon habitat in the Fraser River estuary would cause "significant adverse cumulative effects" to these whales.^[20]
- ✓ With so few Southern Residents left, every whale matters. Even one fatal ship strike could have consequences for survival and recovery.^[21]

