

The Seattle Times



Group: protect orcas in West Coast waters

A conservation group is asking federal officials to protect endangered killer whales in the marine waters off the West Coast

January 16, 2014

SEATTLE —

A conservation group is asking federal officials to protect endangered killer whales in the marine waters off the West Coast.

The southern resident killer whales are frequently seen in Puget Sound during the summer. Scientists have been trying to better understand their winter movements.

The group says those offshore areas should now be added as critical habitat. Such a designation would require federal officials to limit activities that harm the whales.

The Center for Biological Diversity on Thursday petitioned the National Marine Fisheries Service to designate critical habitat for orcas along the coast of Washington, Oregon and California.

Federal biologists have tracked the orcas as they traveled extensively along the coast, from Cape Flattery, Wash. to Point Reyes, Calif.

NOAA biologist Lynne Barre said Thursday she hadn't read the petition yet but that the agency will evaluate the information it has been collecting and determine how to respond.