

Experts weigh next steps, possible capture to save ill orca

By PHUONG LE
Associated Press

SEATTLE — A young, sick whale is skinnier than ever and in poor condition nearly two months after an international team of experts began taking extraordinary measures to save her.

Now, a U.S. agency and its partners are weighing whether to intervene further to help the female orca known as J50 by temporarily capturing her, treating her on the spot and releasing her, or holding her for a short time for rehabilitation before returning her to the wild.

Veterinarians believe they have exhausted treatment options in the field, including twice injecting the free-swimming whale with antibiotics in the Northwest waters.

"No rescue would proceed while J50 remains with J Pod and her family group," NOAA Fisheries, the agency responsible for marine mammal protection, said late Tuesday.

Teams would only rescue the orca if she becomes stranded or separated from the rest of her tightly knit group of whales to minimize any potential risks to those other whales, the agency said.

J50 is one of just 75 of the fish-eating orcas in Pacific Northwest waters. Another orca in the same pod, known as J35, triggered international sympathy this summer when she kept the body of her dead



Brian Gisborne/Fisheries and Oceans Canada
Southern Resident killer whale J50 and her mother, J16, swim Aug. 7 off the west coast of Vancouver Island near Port Renfrew, B.C.

calf afloat in waters for more than two weeks.

The southern resident killer whales don't have enough chinook salmon, the staple of their diet. They also face threats from toxic contamination as well as vessel noise and disturbances that disrupt their ability to communicate and forage.

There hasn't been a successful birth in the population since 2015. Losing J50 would also mean losing her reproductive potential, biologists say.

An international team of Canadian and U.S. whale experts has mounted an inten-

sive effort to help the young orca since concerns were raised in mid-July.

They have taken breath and fecal samples but still don't know for certain what's wrong with J50.

Response teams have injected her twice with antibiotics and tried to give her medication to help with parasitic worms, which they believe she has based on fecal samples taken from her mother.

Teams have also dropped several live salmon from a boat as J50 and her pod swam

fish could be used as a means of delivering medication.

Drone images taken Monday showed J50 much thinner than she was last year. Her mother, J16, has also declined in the past month, perhaps because of the burden of helping catch and share food with J50, experts said.

"Things are bad with her right now," Joe Gaydos, a wildlife veterinarian and science director of SeaDoc Society said. "She's one tough little cookie. It's amazing that she's still going."

As part of the response team, he tried unsuccessfully Friday to give the orca a dewormer by dart. He said experts met Monday to discuss a range of scenarios, including the pros and cons of capturing a free-swimming whale and when to intervene.

"We don't want to take her from her mom where we have a J35 situation. We don't want to have an impact on J pod," Gaydos said, but waiting until she strands may also be too late. "These are very hard questions to answer and I think that right now the good thing is we're talking about all the options."

NOAA Fisheries announced two meetings in Washington state this weekend — in Friday Harbor and Seattle — to get public input on next steps.

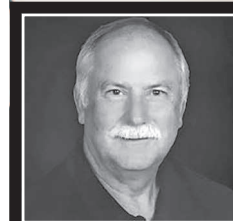
What to do to help J50 has generated intense emotional reactions on social media

and other forums. Some have pleaded with federal officials to do everything they can to save her, including feeding her or capturing her. Others worry that more intervention would stress her and her family members. They think that nature should be allowed to run its course.

"We would love J50 to survive," said Susan Berta, co-founder of the Orca Network, an advocacy group. "At what point are we doing more harm than good?"

The last time scientists rescued a killer whale in the region was in 2002 when a northern resident killer whale known as Springer was found swimming alone in Puget Sound.

She was moved into a floating net pen in Puget Sound and veterinarians assessed her condition and treated her. She was fed live salmon in the pen. She returned to her family of whales in Canada later that year and in 2013 was seen with her new calf.



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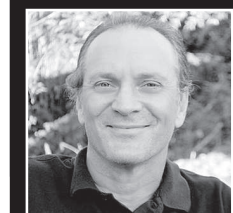
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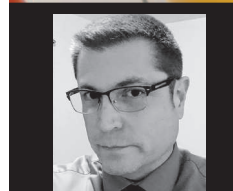
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Q: What is the the most demanding part of being a Funeral Director?

A: The winner of that distinction goes to contentious surviving family & friends. While I understand that everyone experiences grief differently, there is certain uncivil behavior I will not tolerate. The first is when one or both sides try to curry my favor to their cause (sometimes informing me of all the bad deeds the other party is alleged to have done). The other is witnessing bullying or intentionally leaving someone out of the decision making process. While I understand that there's always 2 sides to every story I have to inform each party that self serving, discourteous behavior is unacceptable, and remind them of my role (being neutral) is to facilitate an agreement or compromise which helps them find closure & memorializes their loved one in a way befitting of their life. It is to facilitate an agreement or compromise which helps them find closure & memorializes their loved one in a way befitting of their life.



A rendering of potential designs for a Scandinavian Heritage Park.

Monument: 'Still a lot of unknowns'

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Council for approval by the end of the year, Bowler said. The city's Historic Landmarks Commission will also need to review the final design.

Peoples Park, between 15th and 16th streets on Marine Drive, includes a parking lot and a grassy area dotted with trees and shrubs. Most days the park is empty, except at midday, when Filling Empty Bellies, a nonprofit that works with the homeless, serves free

lunch six days a week.

The designs for what could be the new version of Peoples Park include a midsummer pole, a flag display and a troll sculpture. Both designs also use text, pictures and other types of sculptures, panels or maps to convey the rich history of Scandinavians in Astoria. The designs also retain most of the trees and grassy, natural parkland. The final design will likely be a blend of elements from the two different designs.

Nancy Lane, who sits on the park committee, said it was difficult to find symbols or items to represent all the Scandinavian nationalities that immigrated to Astoria. Lane and her daughter talked about what the people would have had in common. Steamer trunks, they decided. At Tuesday's meeting, Lane read from a statement advocating for the inclusion of a sculpture depicting piled steamer trunks.

"They all left their families to come here to start a new life

and they had everything in that one trunk," Lane said later.

Steamer trunks are something the park designers have considered including, though not piled up as Lane suggested. They hoped to have sculptures of trunks placed next to each other to do double duty as interpretive tools and as places to rest or play.

"This is just the beginning of this process," Lampi reminded the audience Tuesday. "There are still a lot of unknowns."

Center: It will run two to three shifts a day

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Parking for the center will be on Marine Drive.

Chris King, a project manager with Fresenius Medical Care, said the company will install 17 kidney dialysis stations, including one in a separated room for patients with special health concerns.

"We wanted to be in Astoria proper," King said. "It's a pretty small market, so other available properties had challenges. This just wound up being a good fit."

The center will run two to three shifts a day and also cater to tourists in need of dialysis, he said. Fresenius has 40 centers in Oregon. The closest to Astoria is in St. Helens.



Fresenius Medical Care
Fresenius Kidney Care will build out the inside of a new center in Astoria with kidney dialysis machines arrayed around a central space, similar to a center in Portland.