

# NOAA: Puget Sound killer whales to stay protected

August 2 2013

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Federal scientists have decided Puget Sound killer whales will remain protected under the Endangered Species Act.

The decision Friday from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration follows a yearlong review of a petition.

The petition was brought by the Sacramento-based Pacific Legal Foundation on behalf of California farmers who faced water restrictions to protect salmon that the orcas eat. They argued the Puget Sound orcas were part of a north Pacific population and didn't qualify for the 2005 endangered species listing.

A NOAA spokesman in Seattle, Brian Gorman, says the scientific review determined the Puget Sound orcas are distinct from other [killer whales](#) and still need protection. There are about 85 orcas in three pods, which also spend much of the year in the Pacific.

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