

10 May 2013

Dear Washington Sea Grant reviewers:

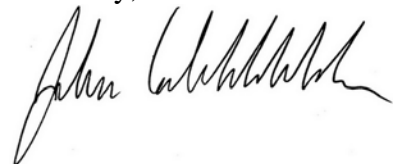
In February 2013, Cascadia Research Collective co-sponsored a workshop on harbor porpoise research with Pacific Biodiversity Research. The workshop was a first on harbor porpoise in this region and there was clearly consensus on the need for additional monitoring of harbor porpoise and especially the key role some of the new approaches for acoustic monitoring could play. This workshop also showed the important role that PBI has played in helping to bring researchers together and further collaborative research on this important species.

Harbor porpoise abundance and distribution in Washington inside waters has clearly been changing in recent years. At this point we do not understand the magnitude or reasons for these changes but it has clearly put harbor porpoise at increased risk of entanglement in fisheries and record numbers of dead harbor porpoise were recovered in 2012. Traditional methods of stock assessment of harbor porpoise involving aerial surveys (many of which we have conducted) pose risks to researchers, while other techniques, such as tagging, are invasive to the animal. A new approach is needed and acoustic monitoring could prove to play a key role in future monitoring efforts because it presents a safer and less expensive method of monitoring efforts.

We have already begun experimenting with acoustic monitors in south Puget Sound and, to assist in the research proposed by PBI, we will be available to place a C-POD as a permanent point transect acoustic monitor to collect data. The effort to obtain a probability of detection for these C-PODs will be valuable in providing a basis for comparing monitoring efforts in the different areas of the Puget Sound. A collaborative monitoring effort, spanning from south Puget Sound up to the San Juan Islands, will be much stronger than three separate, unconnected efforts.

This data will be used to develop a recommendation for an acoustic point survey network to contribute to NOAA's stock assessments of the harbor porpoise.

Sincerely,



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