



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Oklahoma and Coastal Washington Announce “Oklahoma Killer Whale Project” to Support Endangered Southern Resident Killer Whales

Oklahoma City’s Kirkpatrick Foundation and Washington’s SR³ non-profit organization join together to support endangered Southern Resident killer whales

OKLAHOMA CITY, OK & DES MOINES, WA — Representatives from Oklahoma’s [Kirkpatrick Foundation](#), [Save the Illinois River](#), and the city of Tahlequah, OK as well as Washington’s [SR³](#) – Sealife Response, Rehabilitation and Research – and the city of Des Moines, WA joined forces today to announce a new partnership. The “Oklahoma Killer Whale Project” will honor the connection between Tahlequah, OK and Tahlequah, or J35, a member of the [Southern Resident](#) killer whale community. The collaborative effort has formed a “Sister Community” to support SR³’s Southern Resident health assessment research and connect Oklahoma-based ocean enthusiasts to the coastal waters of the Pacific Northwest.

“In Oklahoma, we recognize the connection between our own Tahlequah — a city where environmental and animal protection has a vibrant history — and the endangered Southern Resident killer whales,” said Ed Brocksmith, Secretary & Treasurer, Save the Illinois River.

Tahlequah (J35), the killer whale who captured the world’s attention when she carried and grieved for her deceased calf for seventeen days in 2018, successfully gave birth to a boy (J57) on or about September 4, 2020. The birth of this calf in the Southern Resident killer whale family is a hopeful sign for a group that is near extinction.

“We are utterly delighted to celebrate the birth of this calf to Tahlequah, and we recognize this moment in time as a unique opportunity to highlight the struggles that remain to protect this species—and so many others—from pollution and, ultimately, extinction,” said Louisa McCune, Executive Director, Kirkpatrick Foundation.

A large component of the partnership is a double match fundraising effort that will be directed toward the organization’s research program, which informs conservation efforts for the Southern Resident killer whales. Donations will not only be matched dollar-for-dollar by the Kirkpatrick Foundation, up to \$20,000, but an anonymous donor in Washington State will also match donations dollar-for-dollar, up to \$40,000, in general support of the non-profit. This unique

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opportunity allows those passionate about helping marine wildlife to quadruple their impact! Interested in helping? Learn more by clicking [here](#).

Additional efforts and opportunities being explored across this partnership include a future Zoom Education Series, an Oklahoma Ambassadors Program making future trips to the Salish Sea, and an “Oklahoma Whale Conservation Society.”

“No matter where you live, we all have a role to play in protecting our oceans. Forging connections like this is an essential part of maintaining healthy marine ecosystems,” said Casey Mclean, SR³ Executive Director and Veterinary Nurse. “It is heartwarming to see people from across the country coming together to protect this special population of whales. I think it shows how we can still change course here, and that should give us all hope right now.”

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PRESS PACKET: Virtual assets for the press are available [here](#).

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