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*Our file    Notre référence*

November 19, 2021

EVOS Trustee Council:  
[dfg.evos.restoration@alaska.gov](mailto:dfg.evos.restoration@alaska.gov)

Dear Trustee Council members:

Re: NGOS killer whale research funding

I am writing to express my strong support for continued funding of North Gulf Oceanic Society's killer whale research program in Prince William Sound and Kenai Fjords.

The long-term field research that NGOS has been conducting is critical to future conservation and management of killer whales in the northern Gulf of Alaska. It is especially important that assessment continues to monitor the recovery of killer whale groups affected by the Exxon Valdez oil spill.

As the oceans' top predator, killer whales rely on healthy and productive marine ecosystems. But climate change is affecting these ecosystems, and killer whales are vulnerable to such effects. This is clearly evident in the continued decline of endangered Southern Resident killer whales in British Columbia and Washington State. It is only through decades of population monitoring and field studies of foraging behaviour that my colleagues and I were able to establish the dependency of Southern Residents on Chinook salmon for their survival. Recent management actions in Canada and the US to improve availability of Chinook salmon for the whales have resulted from this knowledge, and hopefully this will improve the future prospects of this population.

The research that NGOS is undertaking is equally important to the conservation of killer whales in the northern Gulf of Alaska. This vital work needs to continue, and I strongly urge that funding be provided in order for it to do so.

Sincerely,

John K.B. Ford, PhD  
Marine Mammal Scientist (Emeritus), Pacific Biological Station, Fisheries and Oceans  
Canada

Co-Chair for Marine Mammals, Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada  
(COSEWIC)