



# San Juan County MRC

## Southern Resident Killer Whale Recovery Efforts

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# History Of MRC SRKW Actions

Prevented scenes like this!



Photo: Alisa Schulman-Jangier



# History of MRC & SRKW Actions

Produced whale watching  
guideline recommendations





Reducing  
toxins in the  
food web

Reducing the  
risk of oil  
spills.



**San Juan County Marine Stewardship Area**

Included the  
voluntary no-  
boat zone on  
the west side  
of San Juan  
Island.





# History of MRC SRKW actions

Forage fish habitat restoration for salmon recovery





# Current MRC SRKW Actions



2017  
community  
workshop  
Friday Harbor





# Current MRC SRKW Actions

The Whale Warning Flag  
A social prompt to promote  
better boater behavior





Improve boater behavior & compliance with Be Whale Wise Guidelines.

## 1) Distribute whale warning flags





# Improve boater behavior & compliance with Be Whale Wise Guidelines



## 2) Education & Outreach campaign



**WHALE WARNING FLAG**

Learn about the regulations and guidelines in place to help keep you safe and protect marine life.



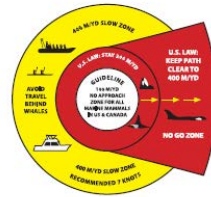
**THIS FLAG TELLS YOU (AND LETS YOU TELL OTHERS) THAT WHALES ARE NEARBY**

**WHALE AND SALMON SANCTUARY (VOLUNTARY NO GO ZONE)**




San Juan County Marine Stewardship Area

**BE WHALE WISE**



Go to [bewhalewise.org](http://bewhalewise.org) for more information.

**KNOW THE ZONES**




This flag indicates whales are within 0.65 mile (1km) of the boat flying the flag, proceed with caution.

**IF YOU SEE THIS FLAG**


1. Slow down to 7 knots or less.
2. Be prepared to adjust course.
3. Follow the Be Whale Wise Guidelines to ensure you comply with the law and turn off depth sounders and fish finders.

**IF YOU HAVE THIS FLAG**

1. When you are within 0.65 miles (1km) of whales, slow to stop, raise flag.
2. Follow the Be Whale Wise Regulations to ensure you comply with the law & turn off depth sounders and fish finders.
3. Lower flag once you or the whales have left the area.



Scan this code with your smartphone camera or go to [bewhalewise.org](http://bewhalewise.org) for more information.



**WHALE WARNING FLAG**





# Improve boater behavior & compliance with Be Whale Wise Guidelines



## 3) How effective is this tool?



### Boating with Whales in the Salish Sea

The core critical habitat of the endangered Southern Resident killer whale is located in the heart of the Salish Sea within the San Juan Islands. When Southern Residents are present in the Salish Sea during the spring, summer and fall there are vessels within acoustic range of the whales virtually all the time hindering their ability to navigate, detect increasingly scarce prey, and communicate.

In an effort to address vessel impacts around the San Juan Islands the County and the San Juan County Marine Resources Committee are piloting the use of a Whale Warning Flag this summer.

This survey is part of this pilot study. The survey aims to measure public knowledge, attitude and actions related to boating with whales in the Salish Sea and surrounding the use of a Whale Warning Flag. The survey is anonymous and open to all interested in participating, but particularly those who are residents and visitors to San Juan County.

Thank you for your time. The survey is in 3 sections and should take approximately 5 minutes to complete.

\* Required

1) Are you a resident of San Juan County? \*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

2) If you are a visitor where are you visiting from?

- ☐ A neighboring County (e.g., Whatcom, Skagit, Islands, Jefferson)
- ☐ Seattle and South Puget Sound
- ☐ Outside Washington State

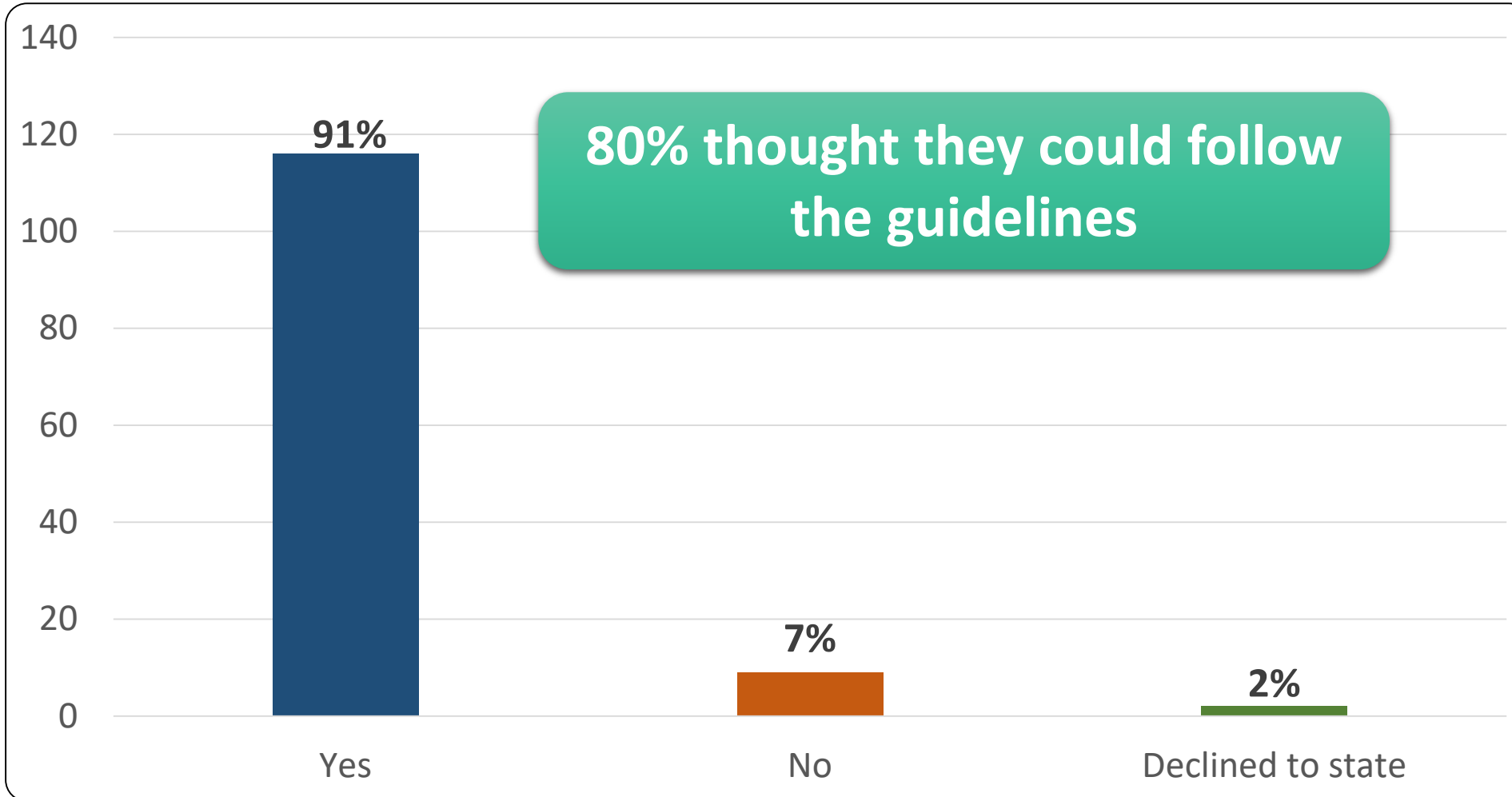




# Improve boater behavior & compliance with Be Whale Wise Guidelines



**Are you familiar with the Be Whale Wise Guidelines and Regulations?**

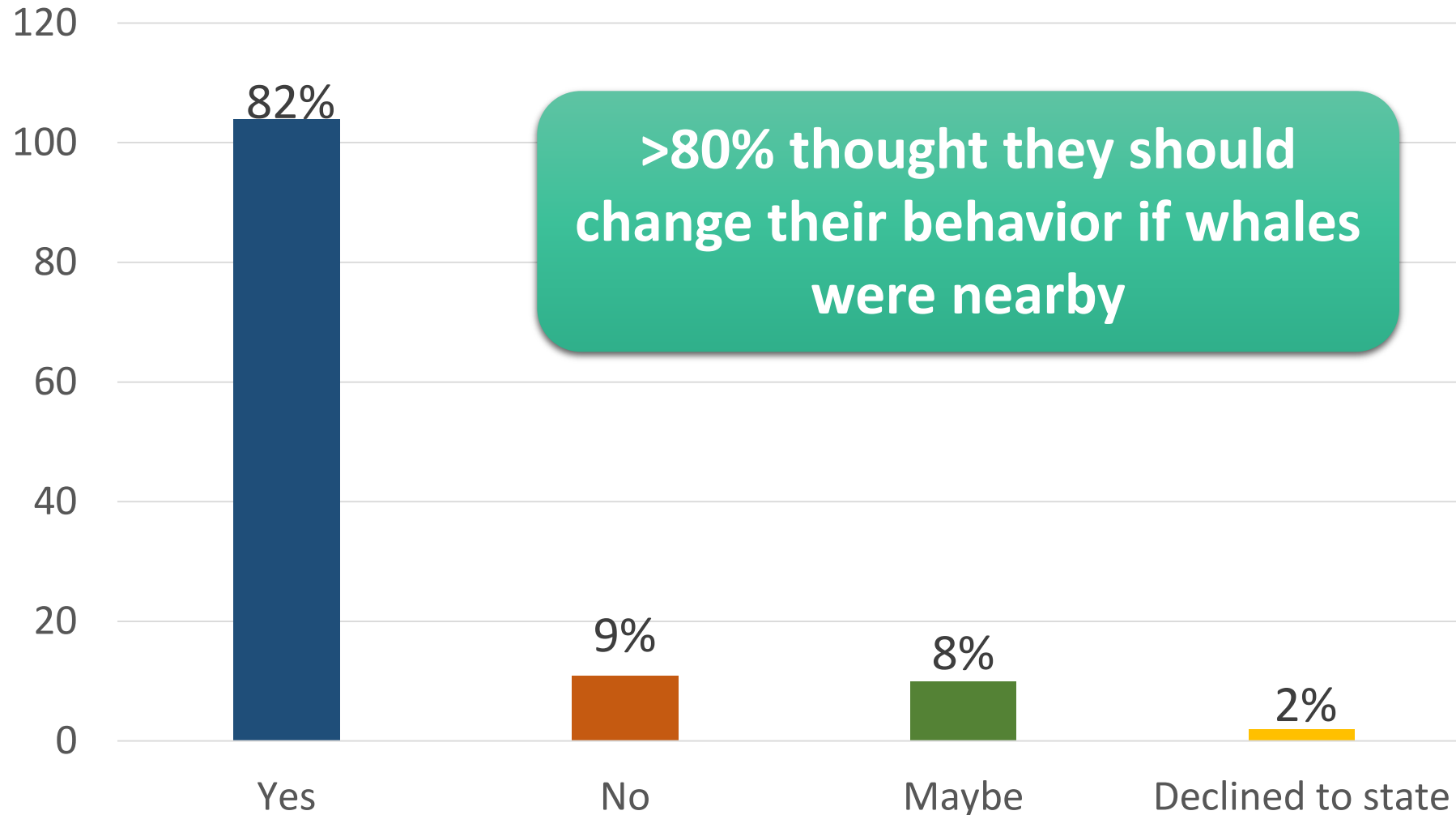




# Improve boater behavior & compliance with Be Whale Wise Guidelines



**>80% thought they should  
change their behavior if whales  
were nearby**





# Improve boater behavior & compliance with Be Whale Wise Guidelines



- Most saw the flag as warning
- Wanted to fly the flag
- ~250 flags distributed but only a handful recorded flying by Soundwatch
- Issues with flying the flag?





## What if it is effective?

- Recommend flags become part of BWW.
- Make flag available to all boaters through boater registration at minimal cost.





# What's next?

- Continue & extend the whale flag program.
- Take Be Whale Wise to the Seattle Boat Show.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Community SRKW Workshop.
- Engage in a conservation planning process to identify foraging hotspots & stakeholder values.





# Concluding Thoughts

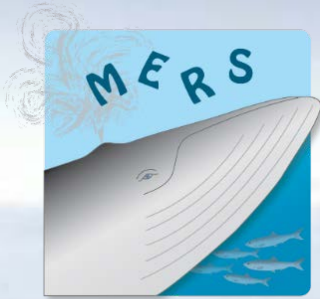
- Education, Education, Education!!
- Change boater behavior
  - key to reducing vessel interactions
  - improving compliance with BWV and laws







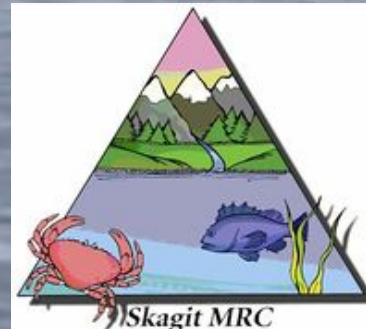
# Thank you to all our collaborators, funders & supporters!



[mersociety.org](http://mersociety.org)



Dr. Deborah Giles  
Dr. Tema Milstein







# Whale Flag Pilot Program: Concept



**RAISE  
FLAG**

- Whales within 0.65 miles (1km)
- Slow down or stop



# Whale Flag Pilot Program: Concept



**SLOW  
DOWN or  
STOP**

- Whales in vicinity
- Be prepared to alter course