

SRIKW Recovery Update

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Killer Whales in Washington

3 ecotypes in Washington

Southern residents

West coast transients

Offshores



Southern Resident Killer Whales



Highly stable social organization: J, K, L pods

Pod size: 15-60 whales

Diet dominated by chinook salmon

Habitat: coastal waters

Distribution: Salish Sea, Puget Sound, Outer Coast



Transient Killer Whales



More fluid social organization

Smaller pods; pods are temporary

Diet is mostly marine mammals, especially harbor seals

Cover larger distances than residents

Offshore Killer Whales



Less studied

Form groups of 2-70 whales,
fluid

Diet is believed to contain
mostly sharks

Habitat: mostly deeper
waters farther from the
coast

Extensive movements





Killer Whale status

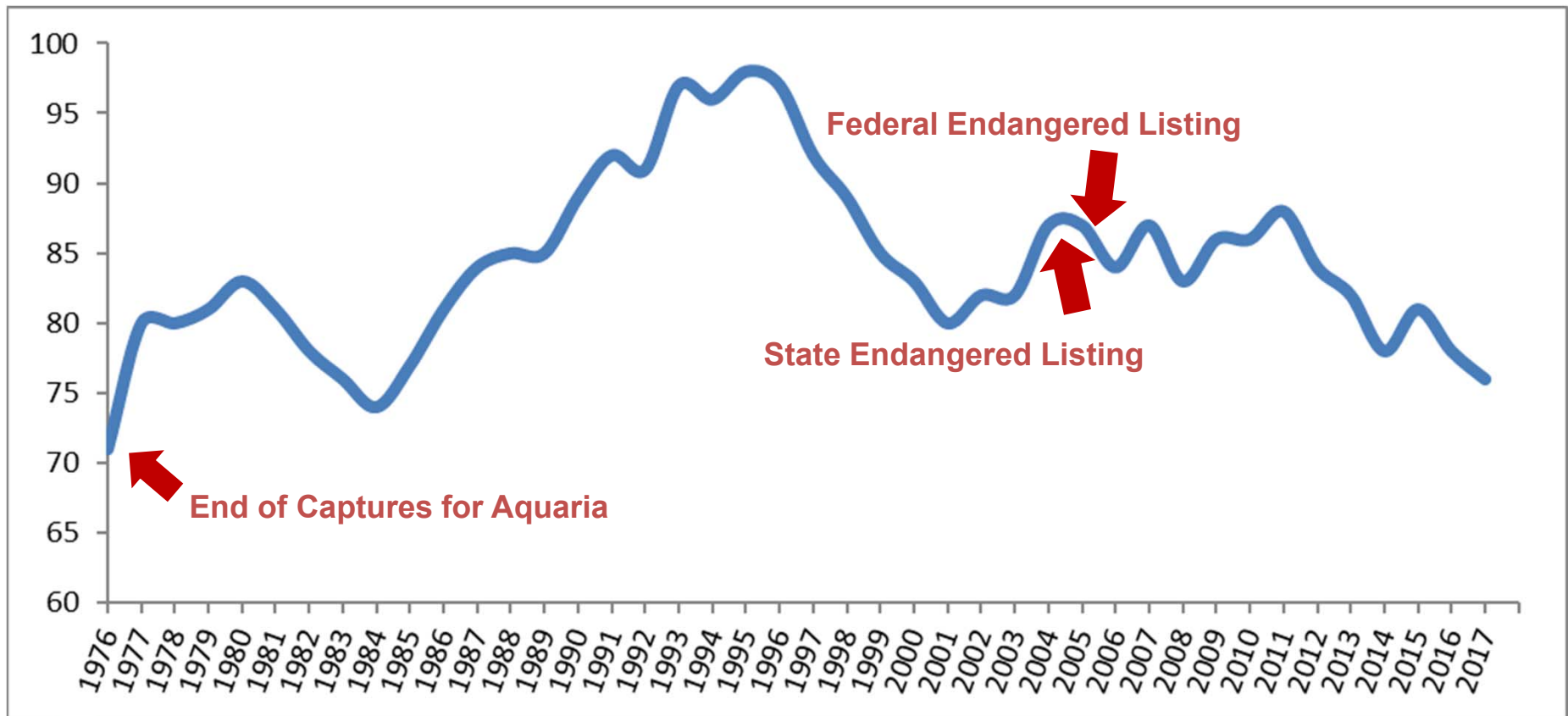
Listing status

	Southern residents	Transients	Offshores
State status	Endangered	Endangered	Endangered
Federal status	Endangered	Depleted (AT1)	-
Critical habitat	Yes	-	-
Marine Mammal Protection Act protections	Yes	Yes	Yes
Canada status	Endangered	Threatened	Threatened



Southern Resident population status

Historic population estimated at around 200 whales in late 1800s



What's the latest?

73 SRKW

- **J pod:** 10 adult females, (1 post-reproductive); 2 young females; 4 adult males; and 5 young males, and one female baby- Tofino (N'āčiqs, J56)
- **K pod:** 7 adult females (2 post-reproductive); 1 young female; 6 adult males; 3 young males.
- **L pod:** 14 adult females (5 post-reproductive); 3 young females; 6 adult males; 10 young males; and one baby- Whistle (L124)

Missing most of summer- Why?





Intervention for the Southern Residents: SRKW Task Force

Recovery goals for the SRKW

Federal objective to downlist to threatened status
Average of 2.3% growth per year for 14 years

Federal objective to delist
Average of 2.3% growth per year for 28 years



Major Threats

Declines in prey availability (salmon)

Chemical contaminants

Vessel interactions and sound

Potential oil spills

Growing human population
Climate change





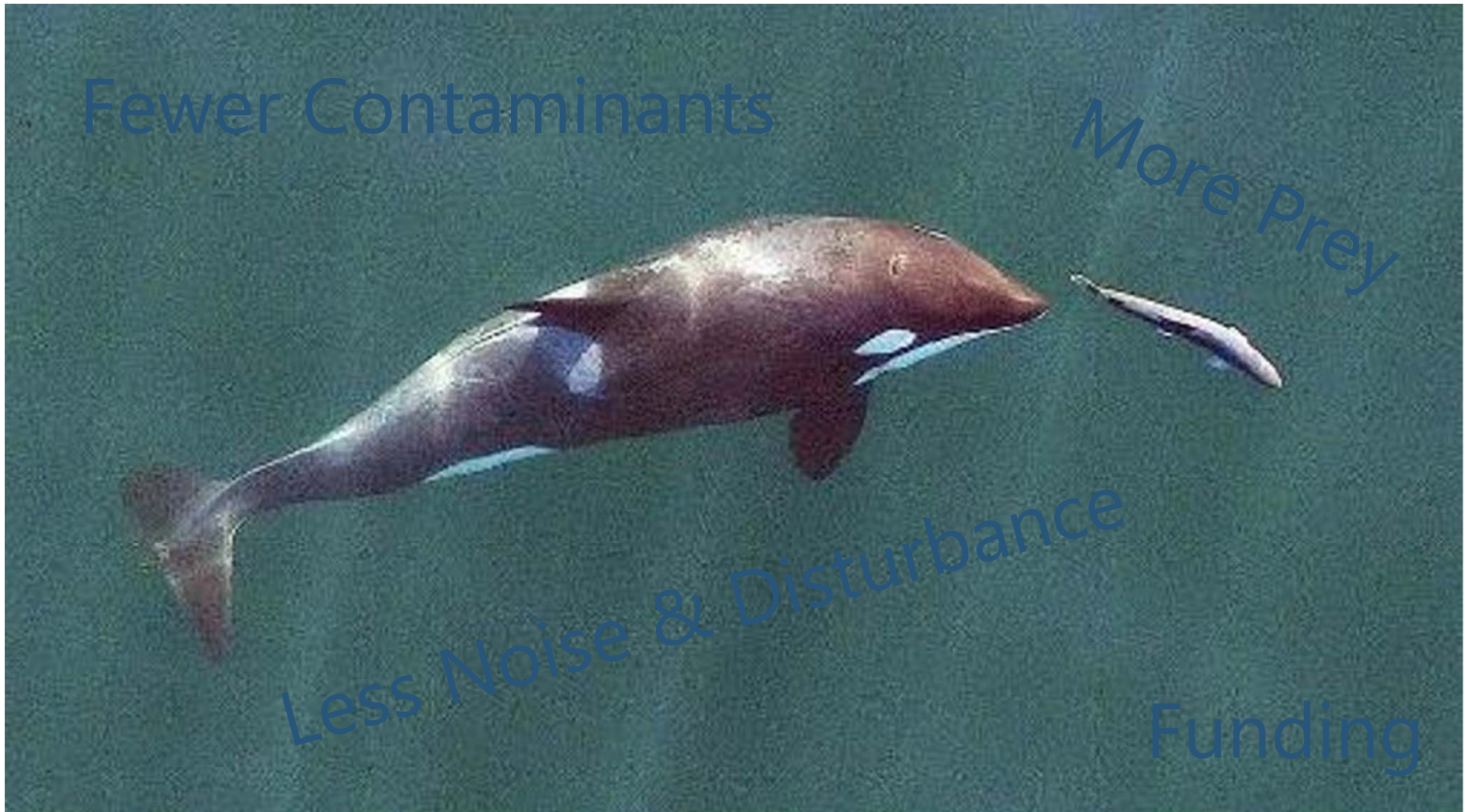
Governor Inslee takes action

Task Force

Charge:

Provide
recommendations
for addressing all
major threats to
Southern Resident
orcas

Year 1: 4 Priorities for Task Force



Recommendation to action

36 recommendations

- ✓ Prey - 16 recommendations
- ✓ Vessels - 10 recommendations
- ✓ Contaminants - 10 recommendations



**4 Governor Bills
Budget Requests**



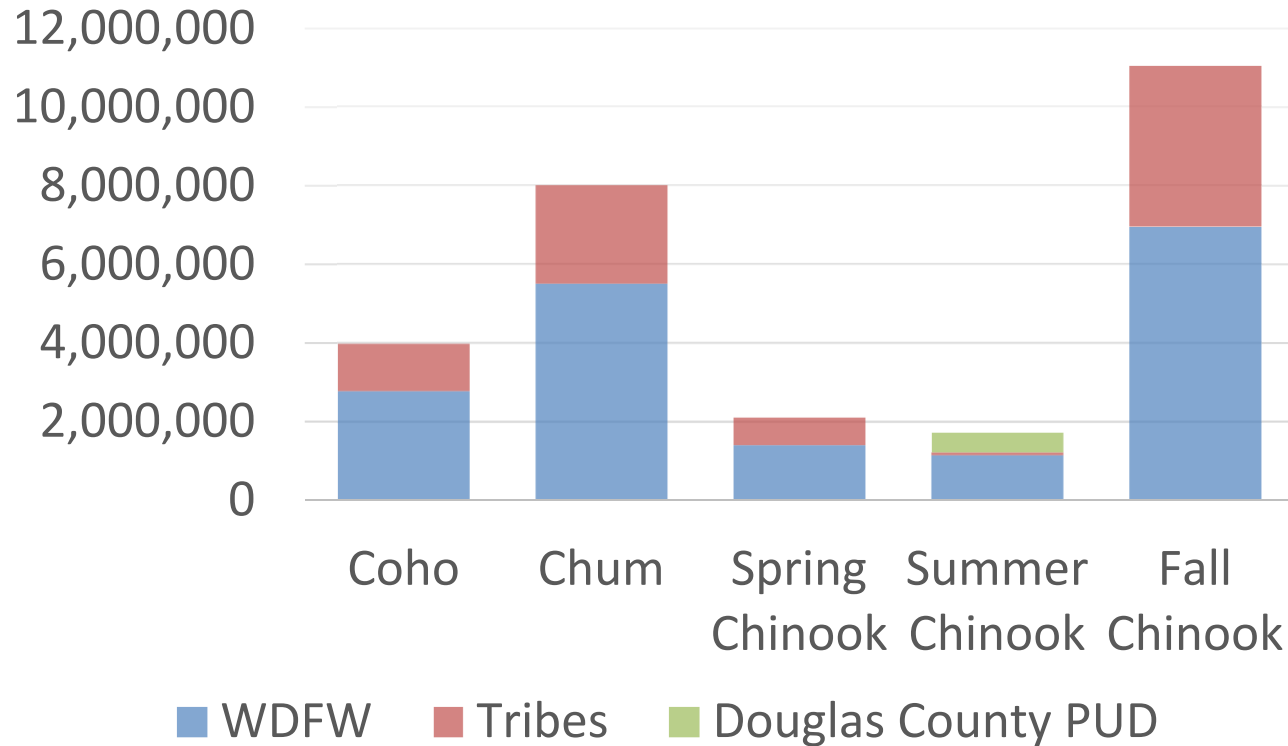


WDFW Implementation of 2018 SRKW Task Force Recommendations

Producing prey



HATCHERY PRODUCTION: 2019 BROOD YEAR



Total fish:
26,820,200



On the water



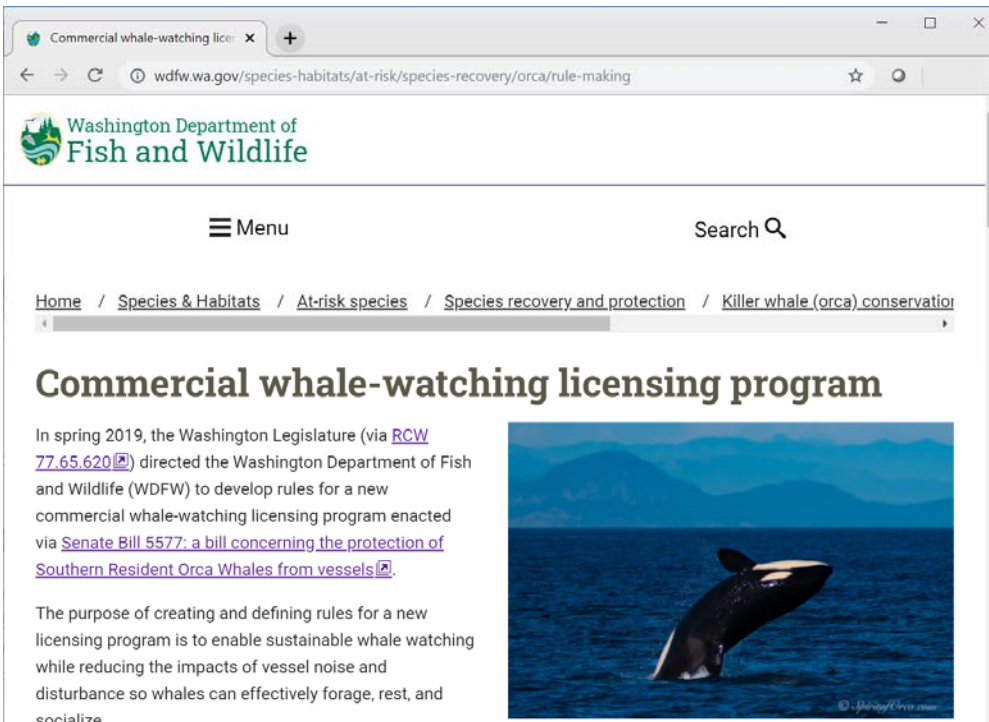
Elaine Thompson AP Photo from July 31, 2015

- 105 whale patrols
- No violations issued, ~dozen warnings
- Reduced vessel traffic
- Increased outreach and education efforts



Commercial whale watching

Licensing program rulemaking underway, ramping up in January



The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL wdfw.wa.gov/species-habitats/at-risk/species-recovery/orca/rule-making. The page header includes the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife logo, a menu icon, and a search bar. The breadcrumb trail reads: Home / Species & Habitats / At-risk species / Species recovery and protection / Killer whale (orca) conservation. The main heading is "Commercial whale-watching licensing program". The text below states: "In spring 2019, the Washington Legislature (via [RCW 77.65.620](#)) directed the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) to develop rules for a new commercial whale-watching licensing program enacted via [Senate Bill 5577: a bill concerning the protection of Southern Resident Orca Whales from vessels](#). The purpose of creating and defining rules for a new licensing program is to enable sustainable whale watching while reducing the impacts of vessel noise and disturbance so whales can effectively forage, rest, and socialize." To the right of the text is a photograph of an orca breaching the ocean surface.

- Advisory committee
- Intergovernmental coordination group
- Independent scientific panel



Protecting habitat



Rulemaking initiated:
HPA single family
residence exemption

Seeking civil
enforcement capacity
in supplemental
budget



Salmon predation

- Warm water piscivorous fish rulemaking



Salmon predation

- Co-Managers Workshop- 11/1
- 2nd Transboundary Pinniped Science Workshop 11/20-21
- Columbia River Rec-not funded, but included in WDFW supplemental budget request



Dams and Barriers

- Barrier analysis
- Fishways, flows, and screenings rulemaking



WDFW implementation

- Supplemental budget request
- Ongoing support for implementation for SRKW



Associated Press photo





Intervention for the Southern Residents: SRKW Task Force

Task Force Timeline

- Final Task Force Meeting- Oct. 7
- Final Task Force Report- Nov. 8



2019 Focus

- Climate change
- Population growth & development
- Doubling down on 2018 rec's
Recommendations
- Life beyond the Task Force



Two New Goals

Goal 5: Reduce the **threat from climate change, including ocean acidification**, to Southern Residents, the region's biodiversity and, ultimately, the wellbeing of Washington's people and economy.

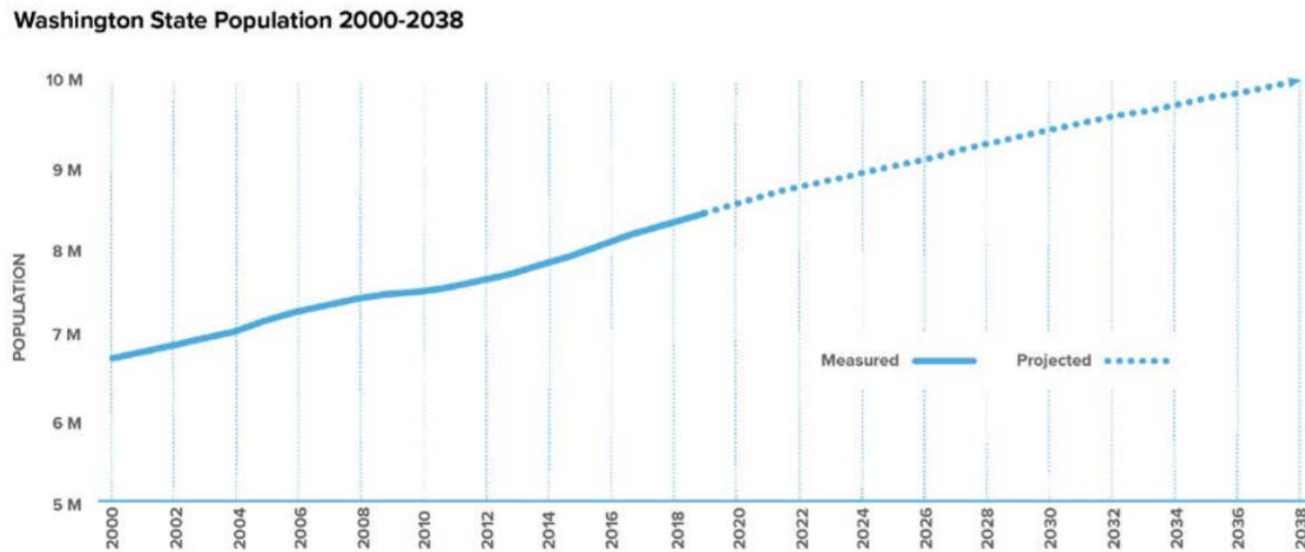
Goal 6: Reduce the **threats from population growth and development** on the important habitats, sensitive ecosystems and food webs that Southern Residents orcas rely on.



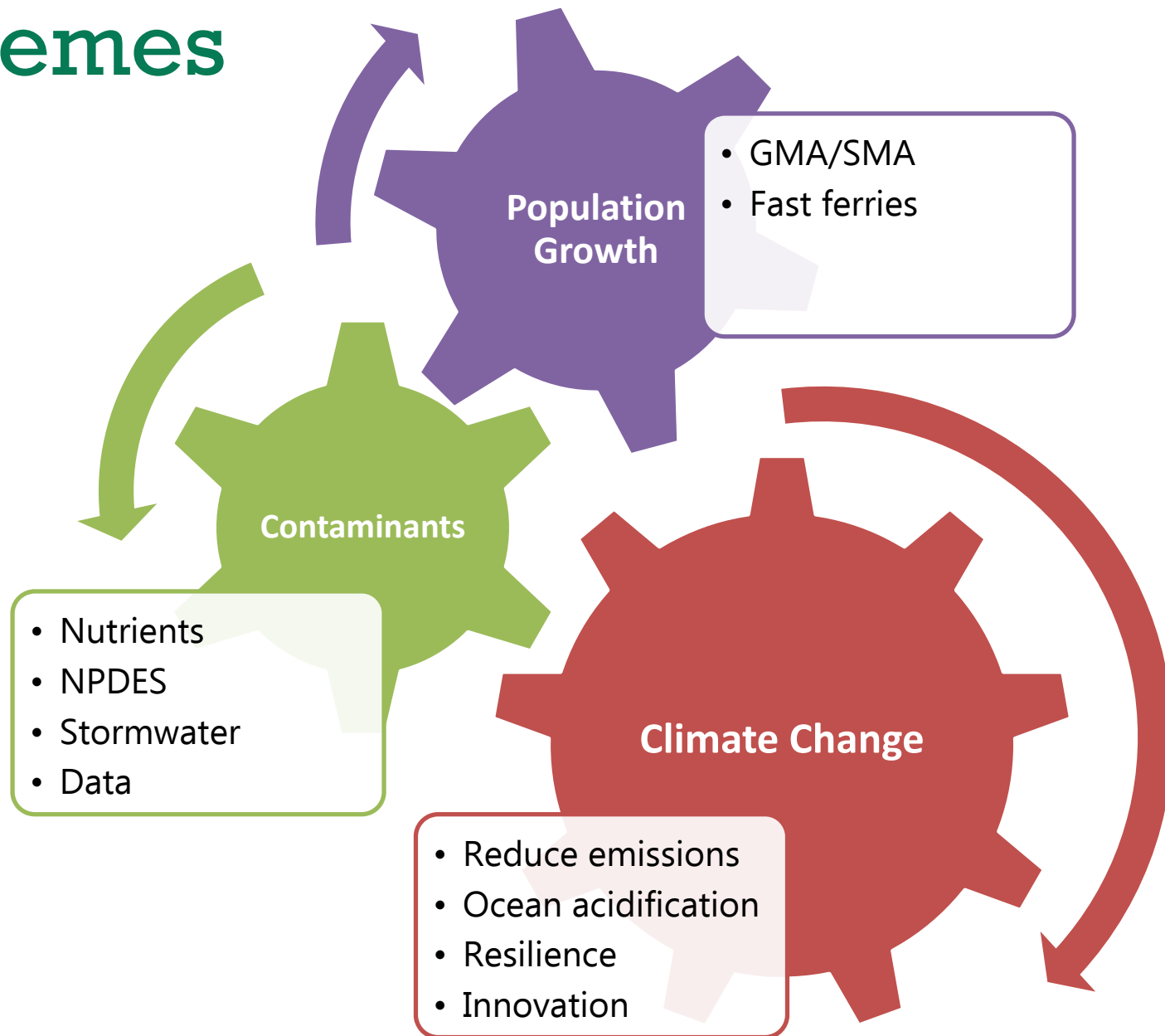
Thirteen new recommendations

- Contaminants (5)
- Population growth (2)
- Climate change (5)
- Life beyond the task force (1)

Figure 5. Washington population growth from 2000, projected to 2038 [39].



Themes



What's next?

Legislative session & requests

Implementation continues

Life after the Task Force



Questions?



Washington
Department of
**FISH and
WILDLIFE**

Department of Fish and Wildlife

