December 12, 2018

Governor Jay Inslee
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504

Dear Governor Inslee,

We are writing to you as Washington State residents and food industry businessmen who are deeply concerned about the heart-breaking plight of the Southern Resident orcas and what it may mean for the fate and future of our region’s people and its lands and waters. Hearing that whales suffer from a lack of salmon – their main prey – resonates with us as we are in the business of feeding people. While they are affected by other factors as well, protecting orca from extinction will require policy changes that protect and restore the healthy, resilient ecosystems orca and salmon – and people – need.

Thank you for establishing the Southern Resident Orca Recovery Task Force to bring together people from across the state to work together to urgently address the needs of critically endangered orca. We recognize that this initial set of recommendations is the result of much hard work by many people. These whales are a highly intelligent and social species. They have graced the coastal waters of our region for hundreds of thousands of years. Southern Resident orcas belong in the Northwest and we must do what is needed to protect and recover them. The plight of orca is urgent and our collective work has just begun.

Our businesses rely in large part on Washington State food producers – farmers as well as fishers – and we all need to be part of the solution. In order for new policies and practices to work for orca and salmon, they must also work for our communities. This is why we are especially encouraged by the Task Force’s Recommendation #9 to establish a forum with tribal and stakeholder participants to identify and develop key elements of a community transition plan that would be necessary in the event of a federal decision to remove the lower Snake River Dams to benefit of Southern Resident orcas. We ask that you place a high priority on moving this recommendation forward quickly and effectively.

Though the topic of dam removal can be controversial, orca scientists and salmon biologists both emphasize the tremendous ecological benefits for chinook salmon, and thus orca, that would flow from a restored lower Snake River. Our state and region needs to better understand the costs and benefits that would be associated with the removal of the lower Snake River dams, and to identify and develop specific mitigation that may be required. Recommendation #9 will help address this important need.
We need new and improved policies and programs that work for salmon and orca - and for fishers and farmers as well. For too long, state and federal policies have needlessly pitted Washington State’s food producers against each other. Recommendation 9 offers us an opportunity to bring people together and explore new approaches that can work better for both inland and coastal communities as well as two of our state’s most iconic – and imperiled – species.

Thank you again for your leadership on behalf of the Southern Resident orcas and the communities and economy of Washington State. We wish you great success and would like to help however we can. Please contact Amy Grondin (ajgrondin@gmail.com / 206-295-4931) if you have questions or we can be of assistance.

Sincerely,

Kevin Davis, Chef/Owner
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*BlueAcre Seafood*
*Steelhead Diner*
*Zane + Wylie’s Steakhouse*
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*Bar Ferdinand*
*The Old Chaser Farm*
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