

ORCAS POWER & LIGHT COOPERATIVE

A Touchstone Energy Co-op



Eastsound Office
183 Mount Baker Road
Eastsound, WA 98245-9413
p:(360) 376-3500 f:(360) 376-3505
www.opalco.com

FUND ELECTRIC FERRIES and TERMINALS TO SAVE THE SALISH SEA Please accelerate electric ferries for the San Juan Islands Routes

OPALCO supports [House Bill 1160](#) and [Senate Bill 5214](#) to fund WSDOT electrification of the ferry fleet and asks that the San Juan Islands ferry routes be moved up to the next appropriations cycle. OPALCO stands ready to help WSDOT Ferries to electrify ferries and terminals on the San Juan Islands routes – including Anacortes – and provide many of the necessary information technology resources and tools to ensure success and amplify the environmental, financial and sustainability of the results.

We urge the governor and transportation committees in the Washington state House and Senate to approve the full funding of our broken ferry system now and deploy cleaner, quieter ferries in the San Juan Islands in the next appropriations opportunity. Our resident Orcas won't be around to benefit in the current WSF timeline – decades away.

Working with OPALCO on the San Juan islands ferry route provides value and savings to WSF:

- Mitigate Carbon Pollution NOW: Ecosystem improvements (carbon, noise and contaminant reduction) to protect and support orcas, salmon and other marine species in the most sensitive wildlife area of the Salish Sea.
- Lower Demand Charges: Potential for off peak power to mitigate ferry charging costs through OPALCO's system of smart fiber-connected devices and energy storage infrastructure that can save WSF millions of dollars in the long run.
- Green Energy: Power to the ferries using our low carbon, clean hydro and local renewable energy – not “coal by wire” as provided by others in the region.
- Seamless Connection: Fiber and LTE wireless broadband coverage for real time monitoring and data collection (ferry operations, carbon mitigation, noise reduction) creates opportunities to optimize ferry operational efficiencies and a platform for greater customer engagement in the project.

There exists a powerful consortium of organizations who are already invested in the health of the Salish Sea, already have significant research baselines and who are ready and willing to cooperate in support of the Governor's goals for ecosystem restoration and species protection.



The benefits to OPALCO are all about quality of life for our rural island residents. The new load that ferry charging would create brings new revenue which helps keep rates lower for our co-op members, who are also regular WSF riders. Electric ferries could act as a battery to augment emergency power needs to keep the islands critical services operational during a crisis, increasing our local resilience.

The benefits to WSF and to Washington State would begin immediately. It may take 6-10 years to build a ferry, but OPALCO will lead the effort to tell the success stories for the public relations win, bring our island organizations onboard and, most importantly, instill hope for the future of our critical area of the Salish Sea.

Please support full funding for WSF to electrify ferries and prioritize the San Juan Islands ferry routes to give our community – of people and whales – the reliable, quiet, clean ferry service that is appropriate for our fragile marine environment. We are agile, innovative and dedicated partners, ready and eager to assist WSF in their critical plans to deploy electric ferries in the region.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

OPALCO Board of Directors:



Vince Dauciumas, President



Dr. Jerry Whitfield, Vice President



Mark Madsen, Director



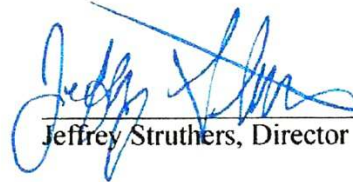
Rick Christmas, Director



Brian Silverstein, Secretary/Treasurer



Peter Garlock, Director



Jeffrey Struthers, Director

ORCAS POWER & LIGHT COOPERATIVE

A Touchstone Energy Co-op



Eastsound Office
183 Mount Baker Road
Eastsound, WA 98245-9413
p:(360) 376-3500 f:(360) 376-3505
www.opalco.com

FUND ELECTRIC FERRIES – ACCELERATE SAN JUAN ISLANDS ROUTES

Background

The current WS Ferries Long range plan for deploying electric ferries appears to put San Juan routes last on the list – in the 2040 timeframe. The WSF long-term strategy includes a rotation of moving the older boats from the southern routes up to the islands until they age out and then, finally, delivering newer, more efficient boats to the routes. OPALCO is calling for WSF to prioritize getting the new, cleaner, quieter and super-efficient electric ferries to the San Juan Islands route in the next appropriations cycle.

The San Juan Islands are the jewel of Washington State, in the international spotlight as a travel destination and the home of the Southern Resident Killer Whales who are critically endangered. Reducing carbon emissions and noise in the heart of the most beautiful and sensitive ecosystem in the state will contribute directly to the Governor's key initiatives to improve habitat for the Orcas, provide high visibility for public relations and presents an ideal alignment for a pilot project.

Environment

Carbon pollution impacts our sensitive marine environment through acidification, warming air and water temperatures and changes to shoreline health and levels. Ferries make up 63% of the carbon emissions from the Washington State Transportation Fleet. The number of species that are affected in this critical area of the Salish Sea is remarkably concentrated and diverse: humans, Orca whales, salmon, oysters, clams, bait fish, near shore eelgrass and kelp beds, birds, otters, seals, sea lions, invertebrates, and myriad other fish and mammal species.

In addition to carbon (and other contaminant) pollution, vessel noise has been identified as a major barrier to the health and survival of our Southern Resident Orcas Whales. The Governor's 2019-2021 budget initiative states: *"The frequent daily transits of Washington state ferries are a significant contributor to underwater noise in Puget Sound."*

Ready Partners

OPALCO is ready and willing to help WSDOT meet the needs of electric ferries on the San Juan Islands routes. In 2019, OPALCO will install the first of many battery energy storage systems which can be utilized to help offset the large peaks that charging electric ferries will incur. OPALCO also brings to the table gigabit fiber and wireless infrastructure throughout the San Juan Islands routes to assist WSF with real-time monitoring and data sharing.



OPALCO is eager to study the effects of reducing peak charges by grid automation (instantaneous load reduction and battery usage) at the exact moment when ferry boats plug in to the grid and share those results as a model for replication.

There are numerous other state and non-profit agencies already heavily invested in the health, monitoring of and advocacy for the Salish Sea including the Friends of the San Juans, the Sea Doc Society, San Juan County Land Bank, San Juan County Preservation Trust, the San Juan County Marine Resources Committee, NOAA, Center for Whale Research, WDFW, WA Dept of Ecology, UW Pacific Marine Energy Center and others. Because of the dire straits of our whale population, we have in-depth baselines for every environmental measure in the region and we expect we can count on the cooperation of these agencies to continue to monitor and report the good work and results of WSF reduced carbon impacts.

Resiliency

OPALCO provides energy and internet services to 20 islands in the archipelago. There are about 12,000 residents and, during the high tourist season, the population swells by 2-3 times. Adding electric ferries to OPALCO's rural, remote system provides a number of benefits: it adds revenue through new load at a time of declining energy usage due to climate change and efficiency gains; and it opens up the potential for a ferry to act as a battery and provide a power source during extreme emergency situations.

Connectivity

Through OPALCO's wholly owned subsidiary, Rock Island Communications, there is now seamless gigabit fiber internet connection to every ferry landing on the San Juan Islands ferry routes, including Anacortes, and a dedicated wireless LTE communication system that ensures continual in-route connections. This provides a unique opportunity to connect the new electric ferries to the internet of things (devices, motors, data) for real-time access to data and provide a sharing platform for broad audience engagement. WSF will be able to closely monitor ferry systems, maximize operational efficiencies and collect the data to measure and demonstrate cost and carbon reduction savings. OPALCO is interested in partnering with WSF to create kiosks at ferry landings to help engage riders in the project and champion WSF's successful stewardship of our natural resources.

Audience

We have unique demographics in the San Juans. Our local population is very active and engaged in environmental issues, and a large portion of tourism is based on wildlife viewing, kayaking, scuba diving and boating. WSF ridership numbers have swelled on this route, and riders are a captive audience during one of the longest ferry rides in the WSF system. The New York Times included Orcas Island on their "52 Places to Go in 2019." The opportunities to share this success story and position WSF and Washington State as leaders in environmental stewardship are great.