

Sea Shepherd Dam Guardian campaign now underway.

Sea lions have been killed at the Bonneville dam and more are in danger. The states have another location in Astoria, Oregon at the mouth of the Columbia River, some 140 river miles from the dam. The kill authority from NOAA allows the states to brand any California sea lion seen eating salmon on any five days and to place that animal on the kill list. Once on the kill list, the animal can be killed anywhere at anytime (unless it is in the rookery in California).

This is a call to action for Sea Shepherd volunteers. The sea lions need you to be their witness and voice as they face death. They are the scapegoats, providing a warm fuzzy feeling covering up human exploitation. Yes, sea lions eat fish. What else are they going to eat and what else have they eaten for millennia? Salmon and sea lions have co-evolved and prior to the advent of human destructive practices on the Columbia River, thrived together.

We need to bring attention to this issue and encourage the government officials to respect the laws of the United States. Sea lions are protected under the Marine Mammal Protection Act. If they want to protect endangered salmon, then they need to address the real causes of declining fish numbers. Killing sea lions with absurd permits is scapegoating at best and does nothing to solve the problem. Killing sea lions appeases the fishing industry, sport fishermen, and hydro-electric proponents, but does nothing to protect salmon.

The governors of Washington, Oregon, and Idaho need to hear that scapegoating sea lions is not acceptable. The Secretary of Commerce and Under Secretary and Administrator for NOAA need to hear from you. Senate and House sub committees with oversight of these agencies need to hear. Your own senator and representative need to hear from you and if you do not reside in the United States, then the US embassy or consulate in your country needs to hear from you.

They need to hear that if they are really concerned about protecting endangered salmon, then they need to address human impacts on the fish. Over fishing, dammed rivers, and pollution are the problems. Sea lions have a minimal impact and killing federally protected animals is not the solution. What if there were a moratorium on all salmon fishing in the river and they released more water over the dam instead of pushing fish through the turbines? These would be significant steps toward protecting the endangered salmon.

We need Sea Shepherd volunteers at the east mooring dock in Astoria and at the Bonneville dam. We are looking for dedicated individuals who can spend long hours in the cold and rain. We are looking for folks who can withstand verbal attacks from some who want to see the sea lions killed. We are looking for men, women, and children who will steadfastly represent the sea lions and Sea Shepherd.

This call is similar to the one for Cove Guardians in Taiji, Japan. We are not able to sink boats or destroy traps here, but we can ensure that the trappings and slayings will not happen in the dark. We can ensure that the public will be educated about the issue, and we can ensure that the courts who are hearing this matter will be provided with accurate information.

Answer this call and write to us at danguardian@seashepherd.org if you can join us at the River. We will send you an information and application package. It would be particularly helpful if volunteers from Japan and the Danish Faeroe Islands joined us on the river. Help us to provide guidance to the US government on how to follow the laws of this country. Under law, marine mammals are protected. Endangered salmon are also protected. Let's work together to focus on the true threat to the salmon, ourselves.

The Sea Lion Defense Brigade (SLDB) has a call out for monitors to watch and photograph in Astoria and at the dam as well. We are coordinating and cooperating with SLDB and In Defense of Animals for this campaign. Trappings and death can occur at anytime, but are most likely to occur in the early morning or late evening (dawn and dusk). The salmon run is likely to continue through May.