



A Program of Maritime Blue

Request for Qualifications: Southern Resident killer whale Visual Sightings Support During the Quiet Sound Seasonal Voluntary Vessel Slowdown

Date of Issue: September 12, 2025

Invitation to Submit Qualifications

Maritime Blue, on behalf of its Quiet Sound program, is now accepting Statements of Qualifications (SOQs) from highly qualified organizations to provide timely, accurate Southern Resident killer whale sighting data for real-time maritime alert systems and conservation efforts in Washington state. Qualifications will be evaluated based on the criteria outlined in this document, focusing on your ability to deliver high-quality, actionable data, regardless of your specific collection methodology. Submissions must be received by 5 p.m. (Pacific) September 26, 2025.

Project Overview & Background

The Quiet Sound coalition is a non-regulatory initiative focused on understanding and reducing the cumulative effects of acoustic and physical disturbance from large commercial vessels on Southern Resident Killer Whales (SRKW) throughout their range in Washington state. Our vision is a quieter and safer critical habitat for SRKW, supported by highly effective detection systems and real-time alerts to mariners.

A core strategic objective for Quiet Sound is to build and maintain an integrated, multi-modal detection and alerting network that provides timely, accurate, and actionable information to commercial mariners. This includes expanding visual sightings available to commercial mariners in the Whale Report Alert System (WRAS), a real-time geographically based alert system. We are seeking partners

who can contribute reliable, real-time or near real-time SRKW whale sightings data for input into Whale Alert and/or Whale Report Apps, which integrate with WRAS. This data has a direct, tangible impact by contributing to real-time alerts that prompt commercial vessels to slow down or alter course, reducing the risk of collisions and disturbances.

Contact Information

All questions and inquiries regarding this RFQ must be directed to:

Gonzalo Banda-Cruz, Program Manager – Quiet Sound

gonzalo@maritimeblue.org

Submission Instructions

Responses to this RFQ must be submitted in accordance with the requirements of this document. Please read the entire package carefully before responding. Submissions must include all requested items in the same numerical order as presented herein to ensure a clear and straightforward review process.

Submission Deadline & Delivery

Qualifications must be received no later than **September 26, 2025 at 5:00 p.m. Pacific**. Submissions received after this deadline will not be considered.

Submissions should be delivered to: **info@quietsound.org**

Scope of Services & Deliverables

The successful organization will be expected to commit to a multi-year memorandum of understanding through June 2028 with annual schedules and funding, subject to funding availability. Quiet Sound anticipates a budget of up to \$60,000 annually for visual whale sightings data collection, subject to funding availability. No compensation is guaranteed to applicants as a result of this RFQ.

The qualified organization will be responsible for providing the following services to support the Quiet Sound program's SRKW Detection & Alerts focus area. We are looking for reliable, high-quality whale sighting data that can be consistently delivered and integrated into our existing real-time alert systems.

The scope of work includes:

- Collecting timely, accurate (in location, heading, number of whales, and species) whale sighting data in Washington state waters, with a particular focus on Southern Resident Killer Whale (SRKW) sightings and baleen whale sightings near shipping lanes in the East Juan de Fuca Strait, Admiralty Inlet, Seattle Bremerton Area, and Tacoma-Vashon Island WDFW Fishery Management Areas
- Inputting collected whale sightings into Whale Alert and/or Whale Report Apps in real-time or near real-time. This is a critical requirement for enabling real-time alerts to mariners.
- Ensuring staff are trained and proficient in the use of Whale Alert and/or Whale Report Apps, as well as understanding the purpose and function of WRAS.
- Communicating any proposed modifications to work in a timely manner to Quiet Sound.
- Providing timely input on final reports to the funders, as created by Quiet Sound.

Deliverables:

- **Monthly reports** on hours of staff coverage, number of SRKW sightings added to Whale Alert and/or Whale Report Apps, and summaries of SRKW occurrences in relevant zones (e.g., slowdown zone, inland Puget Sound forays), in a template provided by Quiet Sound.
- **High-resolution photos and accompanying text** for social media/website updates on the project (e.g., two photos monthly/per period).
- **Monthly invoices** detailing the use of funds for labor supporting the project.

Minimum Qualifications & Submission Content

All interested organizations must meet the following minimum qualifications and provide the requested information in their submission.

Minimum Qualifications:

- Demonstrated experience in collecting, verifying, and managing whale sighting data in a timely and accurate manner.

- Established protocols for data quality assurance, including staff training and sightings verification
- Expertise in identifying Southern Resident killer whales (SRKW) and distinguishing them from other cetacean species.
- Ability to staff operations, as needed, to provide real-time or near real-time data input, covering specified daytime hours (e.g., 07:30-19:30 Pacific time) during September-January in Puget Sound. Please note ability to provide weekend and holiday coverage. In the future, we may explore collecting summer sightings near the San Juan Islands, and we welcome a description of your ability to provide these sightings as well.
- Proven technical capability to effectively input data into Whale Alert and/or Whale Report Apps.
- If your approach relies on volunteers or unpaid community scientists, please describe your commitment to fostering a sustainable and reciprocal relationship with any volunteers involved in data collection, providing tangible benefits and addressing issues of equity and inclusion.

Required Submission Content:

- **Transmittal Letter:** A brief letter confirming the organization's understanding of the scope of work and certifying the signatory is authorized to bind the firm. (1 page max)
- **Organization Background & Experience:** A description of your organization's background, qualifications, and experience relevant to whale sighting data collection and marine conservation. Include examples of similar projects successfully undertaken within the last five (5) years, including client, end user or funder references and contact information. (2 pages max)
- **Proposed Approach to Data Collection and Quality Assurance:** Describe your proposed methodology for collecting whale sighting data. This description must emphasize how you ensure data quality, scientific rigor, and accuracy, regardless of the specific methods employed (e.g., visual observers, community science networks, digital forums, etc). (2 pages max)
 - o Explain your data verification and validation processes.
 - o Detail your staff training curriculum and expertise in whale identification and data handling.

- o Describe how you account for and mitigate potential biases (e.g., spatial clustering) in collected data.
 - o Address your technical capability and proposed procedures for integrating data into Whale Alert and/or Whale Report Apps.
 - o Describe your organization's current workload and its capacity to accomplish the work within the required timeframes.
- **Personnel & Professional Qualifications:** Identify key staff members to be assigned to the project and include their resumes or curriculum vitae, detailing their relevant experience and specialized skills.
 - **Legal & Compliance:** Provide documentation demonstrating your organization's legal status and attest to your ability to comply with all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and ordinances.

Evaluation & Selection Process

Maritime Blue reserves the right to reject any and all qualifications not meeting the requirements of this RFQ. Submissions will be evaluated based on a combination of factors, focusing on the highest quality of service and the organization's ability to meet the project's needs and ensure high-quality and rapidly-available data.

Evaluation criteria will include, but not be limited to:

- **Relevant Experience (30%):** Track record with similar projects, demonstrated success in whale sighting data collection and management, and client testimonials.
- **Proposed Data Quality & Methodology (30%):** The strength of the proposed approach to data collection, quality assurance, verification, and bias mitigation. This assesses the rigor and effectiveness of the proposed methods, not adherence to a specific methodology.
- **Personnel Qualifications (20%):** Professional expertise and qualifications of key staff assigned to the project.
- **Ability to Meet Timelines & Technical Integration (20%):** Demonstrated capacity to meet reporting and data input timelines, and proven technical capability to integrate data into Whale Alert and/or Whale Report Apps.

Contractual & Legal Framework

This RFQ is not a legally binding contract. Qualified organizations may be invited to submit a full Request for Proposal (RFP) including rates and level of effort or enter into direct negotiations for a Client Services Agreement.

Payment Terms

Payment will be made upon acceptance of services and a properly completed invoice, typically within thirty (30) calendar days of receipt of invoice, subject to receipt of funds from the funders of this work.

We look forward to reviewing your qualifications and partnering to enhance SRKW protection in the Salish Sea.