



Florida House of Representatives

Representative Thad Altman

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The Honorable Holly Raschein, Chair
Natural Resources & Public Lands Subcommittee
209 House Office Building
402 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1300

Dear Chair Raschein:

As a Member of the House Subcommittee on Natural Resources & Public Lands, I respectfully request a 2017 Interim Workshop hearing on an issue that is of unique importance to Florida's commitment to wildlife conservation and protection.

In 2016, California (home to SeaWorld's San Diego theme-park), passed the California Orca Protection Act. The Act merely codifies the positions SeaWorld announced in November, 2015 (to end "theatrical" orca shows in San Diego by 2017) and March, 2016 (to end captive orca breeding programs in all its US theme parks and phase out theatrical shows in Orlando and San Antonio). SeaWorld did not oppose the passage of California's Act, because it understood that the law imposed no new obligations on them, and the Act took effect in 2017. Discussing whether this stated corporate practice should be codified into law is vital, as corporate leadership and ownership change constantly. In fact, in March, 2017 the 'New York Times' reported that a large shareholder stake in SeaWorld has been obtained by a Chinese investment firm.

As home to one of the three domestic SeaWorld theme-parks holding this protected species captive, it is important that Florida explore the necessity of legislation to formally codify SeaWorld's stated corporate policy.

I request that our Subcommittee take the time to determine if Florida law needs to be changed to keep captive orcas from being used for breeding, to end entertainment performance, and to prevent captive orcas from being transported out of North America (as would become necessary if an attempt were made to sell, lease, or transfer them to foreign theme-parks in China, for example.)

I am certainly cognizant of the fact that reintroduction of captive orcas into the wild is generally impossible and may be counter-productive to humane treatment. So, allowing these glorious specimens to be held for educational and research purposes is warranted until a feasible humane alternative exists.

Attached, please find additional documentation which I believe supports my request.

Thank you for your leadership and I appreciate your attention to my request.

Sincerely,

Thad Altman

TA/jlc