

Delegation wants whale plan review

The Associated Press

Seattle — All eight House members from Washington state appealed Wednesday for further review before letting Sea World of San Diego proceed with the capture of 100 killer whales.

In a letter to John Byrne, head of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, they said restrictions in the capture permit failed to meet some major concerns raised in two days of hearings last August.

NOAA officials said Nov. 1 that aquarium officials would be allowed to take 10 killer whales off Alaska for display and breeding and to "remove briefly 90 more for research over the next five years."

Sea World was denied permission to extract whale teeth or take liver biopsies and stomach samples. Under the permit, research is limited to tagging and marking orcas and to blood sampling and measuring.

"All of the whales subject to temporary capture must be returned to the water as soon as the testing is completed, usually within a matter of hours," NOAA officials said at the time.

"We still have deep reservations over the unprecedented number of whales to be captured, the goals and techniques of the proposed research and the impact . . . upon the physical and social well-being of the orcas populations," the congressional letter said.