



Sacred Lands Conservancy, 501c3
dba Sacred Sea
www.SacredSea.org

October 18, 2021

re: Resolution Authorizing and Approving Assignment of Lease from Festival Fun Parks, LLC to MS Leisure Company, Inc. for the Operation and Maintenance of the Demised Premises known as Seaquarium Village

To the Honorable Chairman Jose “Pepe” Diaz and Members, Board of County Commissioners,

We, Squil-le-he-le (Raynell Morris) and Tah-Mahs (Ellie Kinley), along with a number of other Lummi Nation tribal members, have long been working to bring our relation Sk’aliCh’elh-tenaut, who is also known as Lolita or Tokitae, home to the Salish Sea.

Today, we wish to share with you our connection to Sk’aliCh’elh-tenaut, our grave concern for her current health and safety at the Miami Seaquarium, and our request that you mandate that her urgent immediate needs be addressed. We also hope that you will understand that her ongoing physical, emotional, cultural, and spiritual needs simply cannot ever be met in a concrete tank. She is an intelligent, soulful, family-oriented individual who needs and deserves to be back in her home waters.

Sk’aliCh’elh-tenaut was taken —without our consent— from our Salish Sea home in 1970, and she has been held at the Miami Seaquarium ever since. Our Lhaq’temish people know orca whales as qwe’lhol’mechen, meaning, “the people below the water.” Our ancestral teachings hold that the qwe’lhol’mechen clan known as the Southern Resident Orcas intermarried with our people long ago. They are our literal relations. Sk’aliCh’elh-tenaut is our sister, our auntie, our cousin, our daughter.

Sk’aliCh’elh-tenaut’s abduction from her mother and her L-pod family reminds us of the time when our own children were taken from us and sent to boarding schools. Some of those children never came back, but when children did return to us, our families felt healed and whole. For this reason, we have been working to bring Sk’aliCh’elh-tenaut back to the Salish Sea, so that she, her orca family, and our Lhaq’temish families, can begin to heal. It is our Xa xalh Xechnging (sacred obligation) to help make families, and our Salish Sea home, whole again.

We have invited Miami Seaquarium and any and all of its parent companies to work with us in good faith for the best interest of Sk’aliCh’elh-tenaut, and to bring her to her Xwlemi Tokw (Lummi Home) in the Salish Sea. We have an operational plan drawn up by the world’s foremost veterinarians, scientists, and field researchers on how to do this responsibly, and we have a short-list of possible sites

in the Salish Sea, where we will provide for her ongoing physical, emotional, and cultural care. We hope that the Dolphin Company, when they assume operations of Miami Seaquarium, will choose to work with us to this end.

However, today we wish to highlight our alarm at the USDA inspection report from this past June. It is clear from the report that Sk'aliCh'elh-tenaut is suffering from conditions at the Miami Seaquarium. We ask that you ensure that:

- she be fed enough
- she be fed high quality food
- her performance routines must be safe and not endanger her in any way, and must be appropriate for her age
- she be in safe, good quality, regularly monitored water
- she be kept with safe and appropriate companions
- she be kept safe from the audience (and their children and cameras)
- she have a USDA veterinarian do an independent full physical examination and behavioral assessment

We further need assurance that:

- her tank and whale stadium not pose any threat to her, whether through disrepair (peeling paint), inadequate shade, inadequate swimming space, exposure to storms and storm-related damages, or anything else

Aside from the recent inspection report, it has long been known that her tank is too small to meet basic Animal Welfare Act requirements, and that similarly her keen psycho-social need for companionship with another orca has long gone overlooked.

While Sk'aliCh'elh-tenaut's immediate health and safety must be seen to, relocation is the only real option for Sk'aliCh'elh-tenaut's long-term physical and psychological well-being. She has worked tirelessly for the Miami Seaquarium for over 50 years now. She deserves to be back at home.

We are prepared to work with and share our operational plan with The Dolphin Company, USDA, and other relevant governmental agencies. We have excellent potential sites in Sk'aliCh'elh-tenaut's natal waters. We appreciate that many people in Miami-Dade County have long loved Lolita, and many of them are supporting us in our efforts. A better life for Sk'aliCh'elh-tenaut is possible, and we hope that you will be part of making it happen sooner rather than later.

Hy'shqe (thank you),

Squil-le-he-le (Raynell Morris)

Tah-Mahs (Ellie Kinley)