

Mary Harrison

I have just learned that there is a possibility that cruise ships could be banned from releasing their exhaust scrubber waste into Washington's Puget Sound waters.

As an environmental scientist who worked in a variety of commercial testing labs, analyzing for everything from pH to VOCs, I am aware of how toxic our environment already is.

Scrubbers on the exhaust from diesel engines are there to remove the toxic and mutagenic chemicals from the exhaust. It then makes no sense to release the resulting scrubber waste to a body of water which is already stressed by the urban runoff, accidental sewer discharges, and recreational boating by a huge metropolitan area such as surrounds the Sound. Many other restrictions have been placed on this area to prevent contamination of the water - so why exempt scrubber waste? People have a tendency to imagine saltwater as a vast quantity of water so huge that anything you put in it will be so diluted that it can't possibly be harmful. Unfortunately, plastics have shown us the error in that thinking.

Let's do everything we possibly can to help the Orcas survive. They didn't create the messy complications that challenge their existence - we did. So they are our responsibility; if they don't survive, it'll be on us. Let's ban the scrubber waste - and increase their odds.