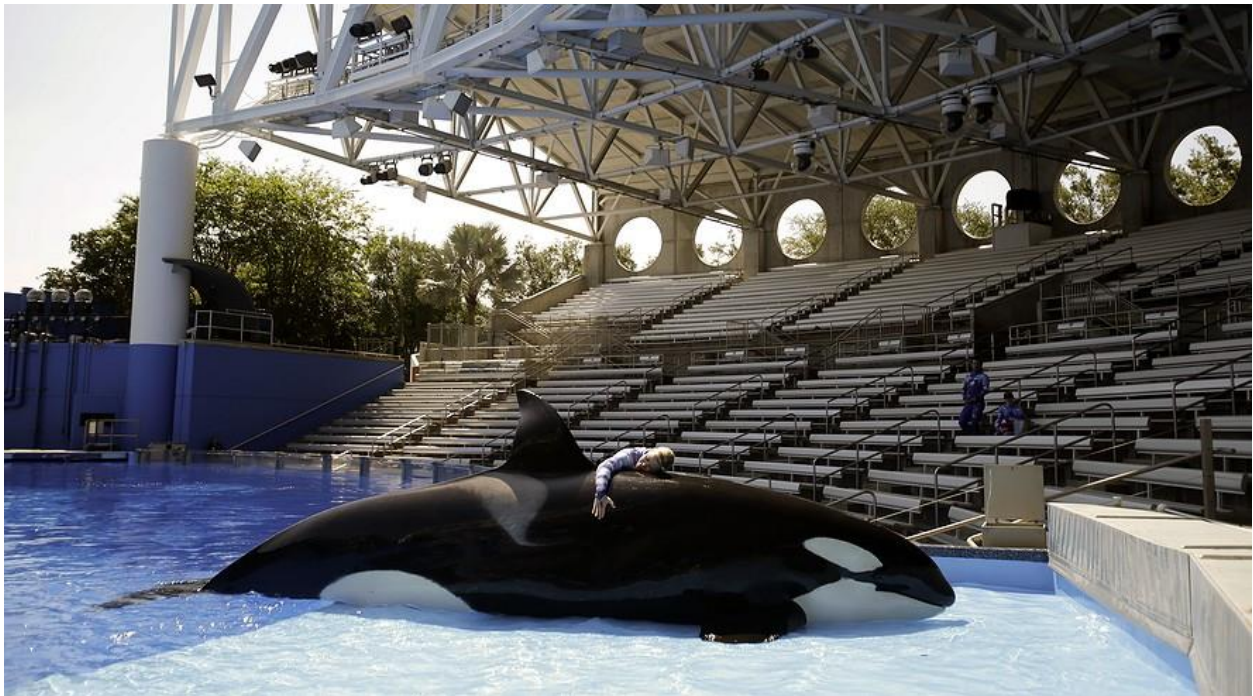


Writing Prompt

Millions of people travel to SeaWorld every year, but the amusement park is now facing trouble. Write an expository essay using text evidence from the following articles. For the first two paragraphs, explain the problems SeaWorld is facing. For a conclusion paragraph, explain some of the different solutions SeaWorld is doing to fix the problems mentioned below. Be sure to cite your sources as you include your text evidence.

Whales and dolphins get bigger aquarium tanks

By Orlando Sentinel



In this April 10, 2014, photo, SeaWorld trainer Michelle Shoemaker hugs killer whale Kayla as she works on a routine before a show, in Orlando, Florida. SeaWorld Entertainment has faced criticism over its treatment of its captive killer whales since the release of the highly critical documentary film "Blackfish" last year. Photo: AP Photo/John Raoux

ORLANDO, Fla. — many people feel it is wrong to keep whales and dolphins in aquariums. They say the animals are too large to be happy in a fish tank. They would be much better off living in the wide-open ocean.

Many also feel that whales and dolphins should not be forced to do tricks. They say the animals only perform in shows because they are forced to. They would rather be swimming in the ocean.

Some aquariums are listening and are changing the way they do things. They are ending or cutting back on dolphin shows. Whales are being given bigger tanks to swim in.

Other aquariums do not want to change.

Bigger Whales, Bigger Tanks

SeaWorld is planning to build bigger tanks for its orcas, which are also called killer whales. Still, it has no plans to stop orca shows.

SeaWorld says its whales and dolphins are healthy and happy. Letting people see them up close, it says, is a good thing. It makes visitors care more about the animals.

Millions of visitors still want to see whale and dolphin shows, said Chris Dold of SeaWorld. "That doesn't seem to be changing at all."

Changes are being seen at other aquariums, though. For example, Baltimore's National Aquarium ended dolphin shows in 2012. It also announced that it might move the animals to the ocean.

Some people were upset that Six Flags Discovery Kingdom in California kept an orca alone in a tank with no other whales. The aquarium sent the animal to SeaWorld where it was able to live with other whales.

More Whales Please

Things are indeed changing, but many aquariums continue to keep whales and dolphins. The Georgia Aquarium continues to have dolphin shows. It is also trying to get more whales.

Some aquariums keeping the animals are making big changes. They are moving away from whale and dolphin shows.

Not everyone is happy about the move away from the popular shows.

Kelly Flaherty Clark is head of animal training at SeaWorld. The changes worry her. She said training for shows is good for whales and dolphins. It keeps them mentally and physically healthy, she said.

SeaWorld said recently that it will give orcas more room. It also plans to make their living space more like a beach.

One Act Was Not Safe

At SeaWorld's Shamu Stadium, shows featuring orcas are very popular. One of the highlights used to be something called the "rocket hop." In that act, whales would push trainers out of the water.

Rocket hops came to an end in 2010. An orca named Tilikum killed trainer Dawn Brancheau after a show. Her death made SeaWorld decide that the act was not safe because trainers were in the water with the whales.

After Brancheau's death, SeaWorld introduced a new orca show. Trainers now dance on platforms to upbeat music. As they dance, the whales leap out of the water. They bob their heads and raise their tails.

There is also a second show at a smaller pool nearby. In that show, human acrobats and dolphins perform together.

SeaWorld's new whale tanks will have 40-foot glass windows. Guests will be able to watch the orcas swimming. SeaWorld said it also plans changes to the dolphin area.

The changes are not meant to take the place of the shows, SeaWorld said.

Not As Many Visitors In Parks

SeaWorld may have one big reason for the changes: fewer people are visiting its parks. People upset about the treatment of whales and dolphins are staying away.

In California, an idea for a new law was introduced this year. If the law is passed, it would make orca shows against the law. The law has not been voted on yet. Right now, it is being delayed to allow for more time to study it.

The law's creator is named Richard Bloom. He said that making a real change is difficult. It will take time to convince the government to act.

Nonetheless, many people agree with him. Whales, he said, should not be in aquariums.

SeaWorld promises bigger pool for its orcas after movie made people angry

By Los Angeles Times, adapted by Newsela staff



SeaWorld San Diego visitors view a killer whale through a window at the park on Aug. 14, 2014. Battered by controversy over its treatment of the orcas, SeaWorld said it plans to double the size of the orca environments at its parks. Photo: Don Bartletti/Los Angeles Times/MCT

SAN DIEGO, Calif. — SeaWorld San Diego is a popular place to view sea creatures up close. Lately, though, some people became upset with SeaWorld.

They say the company mistreats orcas. Orcas are giant sea animals better known as killer whales. SeaWorld San Diego has 10 orcas.

A movie called "Blackfish" said SeaWorld's killer whales were not treated well.

On Friday, SeaWorld San Diego announced several changes. They will make the orcas' lives better, it said. A bigger orca pool will be built.

A Bigger Pool ...

The new pool is called the Blue World Project. It will be 50 feet deep and 350 feet long. It doubles the size of the current one. Visitors will be able to see the orcas underwater. SeaWorld says it will be the first orca pool like it in the world.

Company officials say the pool will be completed by 2018. Other SeaWorld parks, in Florida and Texas, will build their own new pools.

SeaWorld's president, Jim Atchison, says the new pool will be unusual. It will change "how visitors experience killer whales," he said.

Atchison said visitors will be able to choose their view. They can "walk alongside the whales as if they were at the shore." Or, they can watch the whales swim underwater or see them from above. Some of the views will be very up close.

SeaWorld will also spend \$10 million to study orcas in the wild. Finally, it will put together a team of scientists. The team will watch over SeaWorld's orca program.

The scientists will try to improve the "health and well-being" of SeaWorld's orcas.

... But A Bigger Prison?

The new plans did not satisfy People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA). PETA is an animal rights group. It wants the orcas to be put in large ocean shelters.

“A bigger prison is still a prison,” said PETA lawyer Jared Goodman.

SeaWorld made its announcement during a bad time for the company. Since the release of the documentary, many people have grown angry at SeaWorld. The movie attacks the company’s treatment of orcas.

SeaWorld San Diego gets 4.4 million visitors a year. The orca show is its most popular event. Now, people are starting to stay away.

The company admits that ticket sales have dropped. Attendance has been hurt by claims the orcas are being mistreated.

San Diego's leaders still support SeaWorld. The company gives jobs to many people in the city. The San Diego City Council voted to make March "SeaWorld Month."

City Council President Todd Gloria praised the new pool. He said it will make things better for the whales and for visitors to the park.