

Speaker bios for 9/8/2018 Rise for Orca & Climate Justice Event

[Ken Balcomb](#), Center for Whale Research founder and senior scientist . Ken Balcomb is a cinematographer, known for [Blackfish](#) (2013), [Fragile Waters](#) (2014) and [A Fall from Freedom](#) (2011). Kenneth C. Balcomb graduated from the University of California in 1963 with a Bachelor's degree in zoology and a special interest in cetaceans. He later earned his PhD in marine biology from University of California, Santa Cruz. Balcomb worked for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as a field biologist in a whale-marking (Discovery tag) program in the eastern North Pacific Ocean and later as a biological technician at the Richmond, California whaling stations, collecting data and specimen materials from harvested whales for the National Marine Mammal Laboratory in Seattle. In 1966, Balcomb worked as a field biologist for the Pacific Ocean Biological Survey Program of the U.S. National Museum, banding and studying seabirds in the central North Pacific. From 1967 to 1972, during the Vietnam era, he worked as an aviator and oceanographic specialist as an officer in the U.S. Navy. As Operations officer, he tracked whales with the Sound Surveillance System (SOSUS), and made several important contributions to the Navy concerning developing an integrated sound surveillance system. He later worked for the U.S. Navy as an instructor in military oceanography and acoustics in Japan, where he visited all of the operating whaling stations on Honshu and Hokkaido, and did a comprehensive study of Baird's beaked whales for his thesis (published 1989). In 1978, Balcomb worked with the U.S. National Marine Fisheries Service on surveys and harvest monitoring for bowhead whales in the Bering, Beaufort, and Chuckchi Sea. In 1982 and 1983, he conducted whale surveys for the Government of Denmark along the west coast of Greenland; and, in 1985-1986 he went to the Antarctic on one of many International Decade of Cetacean Research (IDCR) whale research cruises conducted under the auspices of the International Whaling Commission. Balcomb founded the Center for Whale Research in Friday Harbor, Washington, in 1985 and serves as its senior scientist and Executive Director. In addition to continuing his long-term photo-identification study of killer whales (Orca Survey) in the Pacific Northwest, Balcomb co-founded the Bahamas Marine Mammal Survey to benignly study whales and dolphins in the Bahamas archipelago employing photoidentification method in 1990. He has authored or co-authored more than thirty published research papers and five books on whale research.

Eric de Place, programs director, oversees Sightline's research and communications teams. He is also a researcher, writer, speaker, and policy analyst who spearheads the Institute's work on energy policy. Known as a leading expert on coal and oil export plans in the Pacific Northwest, he is considered an authority on a range of issues connected to fossil fuel transport, including carbon emissions, local pollution, transportation system impacts, rail policy, and economics. He has researched and published more than three hundred articles, reports, and analyses on these proposals, and his work on fossil fuel transport is cited by regional and national news media outlets hundreds of times each year. His expertise makes him a highly sought-after expert in the field providing him with the opportunity to support allied groups, as well as educate media, elected officials, and the broader public on critical issues affecting our region. Eric is a talented speaker, presenter, and media spokesperson. In his increasingly scarce free time, he enjoys climbing the Northwest's peaks, tidepooling beaches with his kid, and solving the rest of the world's problems over a pint of the region's ale. Before coming to Sightline, he worked with the [Northwest Area Foundation](#), developing strategies to alleviate poverty in rural communities. He has a master's degree in philosophy from the University of Notre Dame.

Verner Wilson from Friend of the Earth is a Senior Oceans Campaigner. Verner Wilson III is the Senior Oceans Campaigner of FOE's Oceans and Vessels Program. Verner focuses on protecting the marine environment from shipping pollution and disturbance in the Pacific Northwest and Arctic. He previously worked for an organization that serves 31 Alaska Native tribes, partnering with FoE since 2016 at the International Maritime Organization (IMO) on efforts to empower Arctic indigenous peoples. Born and raised in Alaska's Bristol Bay with family ties in the Bering Strait, he is a member of the Curyung Tribe in Dillingham, Alaska. Verner has a bachelor's degree in environmental studies from Brown University, as well as a master's degree in environmental management from Yale's school of Forestry and Environmental Studies. He loves salmon-fishing with his family, exploring new cultures, and enjoys the outdoors and sustainable seafood.