

The Honorable Jerry Moran, Chair
The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen,
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related
Agencies

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski, Chair
The Honorable Tom Udall, Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies

The Honorable John Hoeven, Chair
The Honorable Jeff Merkley,
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug
Administration

The Honorable José Serrano, Chair
The Honorable Robert Aderholt,
Ranking Member
U.S. House of Representatives Appropriations
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science,
and Related Agencies

The Honorable Betty McCollum, Chair
The Honorable David Joyce,
Ranking Member
U.S. House of Representatives Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and
Related Agencies

The Honorable Sanford Bishop Jr., Chair
The Honorable Jeff Fortenberry,
Ranking Member
U.S. House of Representatives Appropriations
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural
Development, Food and Drug Administration

May 15, 2019

Honorable Chairs and Ranking Members:

Puget Sound is in serious decline, and recovery continues to be an urgent need, affecting economies at every level. The shared recovery effort of federal, state, local, tribal, and non-governmental partners is lauded as an example of broad-based, effective partnership and innovation, and has for many years received bipartisan support. At the federal level, Puget Sound is recognized as an Estuary of National Significance.

We are writing to communicate the critical importance of sustained federal support for actions that are essential to Puget Sound recovery. Serious, detrimental economic, cultural, social, and ecological consequences would result from the reduction or elimination of federal support for Puget Sound recovery.

Federal support of Puget Sound recovery currently comprises three primary components:

- **Puget Sound Geographic Program.** Managed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), this program has been essential to carrying out the large-scale, regional, federally approved recovery plan for Puget Sound. Extensive partner engagement lies at the foundation of the recovery plan, and the actions it includes are technically reviewed, ranked, and tracked for results by the Puget Sound Partnership. It also supports tribal participation in scientific research, resource recovery planning, and implementation and policy discussions on issues that affect tribal treaty rights.
- **National Estuary Program (NEP).** Like the lead agencies and organizations for the other 27 designated Estuaries of National Significance around the country, the Puget Sound Partnership stewards critical sustaining support from the NEP funds. This non-regulatory program fosters

innovation and idea transfer as it allows each location to be structured and governed according to local conditions and needs.

- **Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund (PCSRF)**. Administered by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), this is a multi-state, multi-tribe program that has provided crucial support for salmon recovery efforts throughout the Pacific coast region.

In addition, the **Pacific Salmon Treaty (PST)** is critical to meeting the provisions of the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA), addressing tribal fishing rights, and maintaining sustainable U.S. fisheries that provide 26,700 full time equivalent jobs and \$3.4 billion in economic value annually. Signed by the United States and Canada in 1985, it provides a framework for the two countries to cooperate on the management of Pacific salmon, and is revisited roughly every 10 years to reflect current conditions and address new challenges. The revamped PST (2019-2028) reflects the international commitment to ensure a better future for salmon and Southern Resident orcas.

The **U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) voluntary conservation programs** for working lands also make important contributions to Puget Sound recovery. These programs help reduce soil erosion, enhance water supplies, improve water quality, increase wildlife habitat, and reduce damages caused by floods and other natural disasters.

Finally, the **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' (USACE)** aquatic ecosystem restoration business line and continuing authorities program support the Puget Sound Nearshore Ecosystem Restoration Project to design and implement large-scale and smaller-scale habitat restoration projects. These programs will leverage already-secured state funds to improve the health of nearshore habitats and their ability to support shorebirds, shellfish, salmon, orca, and humans.

Working together, these funds and programs enable an investment strategy that leverages support for large-scale projects or series of interconnected projects that maximize benefits and outcomes, achieving more than would separate, uncoordinated investments. The loss of any of these critical components would impact the effectiveness of the overall recovery system.

Federal partners have recognized the value of collaborating in these Puget Sound recovery efforts, which:

- **Create jobs** in a variety of industries, including food, hospitality, sustainable forestry, international trade, and international oil transportation safety and spill prevention.
 - Washington State leads the nation in production of farmed clams, oysters and mussels. Puget Sound contributes 79% of the dollar value and 69% of the pounds of farmed shellfish produced statewide.
 - The state's marine industry, which includes fishing fleets, ports, and seafood processors, generates \$30 billion annually.
 - The natural assets in Puget Sound provide a competitive advantage to key industries that compete globally for highly skilled talent.
 - The average annual gross domestic product of recreation and tourism in Puget Sound is \$3.2 billion.
- Help fulfill the federal government's **treaty obligations to the 17 Puget Sound treaty tribes, protecting tribal treaty rights and reserved treaty resources.**
- **Promote resilience** of human communities and thriving coastal economies against natural disasters.

- **Repair and update crumbling infrastructure** and support innovative approaches and technologies such as permeable pavement, rain gardens, green roofs, and other Green Storm Water Infrastructure (GSI) in order to reduce the impact of our growing population on the Puget Sound ecosystem.
- Emphasize **voluntary, non-regulatory approaches** to reach recovery goals as a complement to regulatory approaches.
- Share learning from **continuous innovation** with recovery efforts across the nation.
- Value and integrate **intergovernmental engagement and decisions**.
- **Benefit a broad range of interests**—including shellfish aquaculture, commercial fisheries, agriculture, public safety, public health, recreation, employment, preservation of cultural identity, and human welfare.
- **Leverage funds** from many sources to increase returns on investment.
- Ensure that decisions are informed by **science, technical expertise, effectiveness monitoring, and learning**.
- Use non-regulatory approaches to **reduce nutrient pollution**, particularly from nonpoint sources, in support of the Clean Water Act.
- Collaborate with **British Columbia and the Canadian government**, with whom we share the Salish Sea, to increase investments in recovery on both sides of the border.

A federal government retreat from investing in Puget Sound recovery at this time would be devastating to the ecosystem and economy, severely disrupt ongoing shared efforts, and limit options for action.

Disinvestment now would only result in increased costs in the future to recover an ecosystem that at this time can still be saved. Puget Sound is close to undergoing irreversible changes. Last summer, the Pacific Northwest’s Southern Resident orcas were the focus of international attention, when their critical struggle for survival culminated in the death of a newborn calf whose mother grieved over her calf’s body for an unprecedented 17 days and 1,000 miles. The population has now declined to 75 individuals. It has been estimated that 70 may be the limit beyond which the Southern Resident orcas may not be able to recover. The Southern Resident orca’s primary food, Chinook salmon, is also perilously threatened.

Our local governments invest heavily in Puget Sound through preventing stormwater pollution, enacting ordinances to protect critical areas, protecting shorelines, and supporting other programs. Similarly, the state invests in programs that support clean and healthy water resources and habitats and that promote businesses and jobs that depend upon those resources. Tribal governments are co-managers of the salmon resource in the Puget Sound region and provide steadfast leadership, generous investments, and valuable technical expertise in their commitment to achieving recovery goals. **We ask only for commensurate partnership from the federal government to support ongoing work and the investment by people locally that is saving a national treasure.**

As Congress contemplates funding for Fiscal Year 2020, the undersigned respectfully ask you to ensure that the final appropriations measure includes:

- A modest increase in funding to **\$35 million for the Puget Sound Geographic Program (EPA)**.
- A modest increase in funding to **\$70 million for the Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund (NOAA)**.
- A modest increase in funding to **\$750,000 for each National Estuary Program, including the Puget Sound Partnership, plus \$4 million for competitive grants and programs**.

- An initial one-time investment of **\$57.1 million for the Pacific Salmon Treaty to ensure a successful start, and an ongoing investment of \$52.4 million to fund the complex implementation of an international treaty.**
- Maintain level funding of **\$56.4 million for the NOAA Habitat Conservation and Restoration Program.**
- At least level funding for the **voluntary conservation programs for working lands (USDA).**
- An increase in funding to **\$1.5M for the Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Business Line – Investigations Account** and new funding of **\$0.5M for the Continuing Authorities Program (USACE).**
- Adequate and timely funding to USACE for necessary next steps to complete **federally-required downstream fish passage at the Howard Hanson Dam**, which represents an important step to increasing the number of salmon in Puget Sound and supporting the recovery of Southern Resident orcas.

The undersigned thank you for your past support and urge you to act on these requests.

Signatures appear on following pages.