

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

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

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

May 23, 2018

#### **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 efforts 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 receives critical sustaining support from the NEP funds.

- **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 **U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA’s) voluntary conservation programs** for working lands 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.

**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, valued at more than \$61 million, and contributing about 75 percent of the state’s total production value.
  - 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.
  - Of the state’s tourism and recreational spending, 80 percent is connected to Puget Sound.
- Help fulfill the federal government’s **treaty obligations to the 17 Puget Sound treaty tribes, protecting tribal treaty rights and reserved treaty resources.**
- 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.**
- Collaborate with **British Columbia and the Canadian government**, with whom we share this 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. This year, the

endangered Southern Resident orca whale population declined to 76 individuals. It has been estimated that 70 may be the limit beyond which the orcas may not be able to recover. The orca's primary food, Chinook salmon, is also perilously endangered.

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 economies 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 2019, the undersigned respectfully ask you to ensure that the final appropriations measure includes:

- At least level funding of **\$28 million for the Puget Sound Geographic Program (EPA).**
- At least level funding of **\$65 million for the Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund (NOAA).**
- At least **\$700,000 for each National Estuary Program, including the Puget Sound Partnership, consistent with recently reauthorized funding levels under Public Law 114-162 (EPA).**
- At least level funding for the **voluntary conservation programs for working lands (USDA).**

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

*Signatures appear on following pages.*