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Cedar River Council
 Friends of the Cedar River Watershed
 Friends of the Issaquah Salmon Hatchery
 Greater Seattle Chamber of Commerce
 Long Live the Kings
 Mid-Sound Fisheries Enhancement Group
 Mountains to Sound Greenway
 Northwest Marine Trade Association
 Sno-King Watershed Council
 Trout Unlimited
 Water Tenders

Alderwood Water and Wastewater District
 National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
 US Army Corps of Engineers
 Washington Departments:
 Ecology
 Fish and Wildlife
 Natural Resources
 Washington Association of Sewer and Water Districts
 King Conservation District

April 5, 2019

The Honorable Christine Rolfes
 303 John A. Cherberg Building
 Olympia, WA 98504

The Honorable Mark Mullet
 415 Legislative Building
 Olympia, WA 98504

The Honorable Jim Honeyford
 112 Irv Newhouse Building
 Olympia, WA 98504

The Honorable Steve Tharinger
 314 John L. O'Brien Building
 Olympia, WA 98504

The Honorable Strom Peterson
 324 John L. O'Brien Building
 Olympia, WA 98504

The Honorable Richard DeBolt
 425A Legislative Building
 Olympia, WA 98504

The Honorable Steve Bergquist
 322 John L. O'Brien Building
 Olympia, WA 98504

The Honorable David Frockt
 227 John A. Cherberg Building
 Olympia, WA 98504

The Honorable John Braun
 403A Legislative Building
 Olympia, WA 98504

The Honorable Bob Hasegawa
 223 John A. Cherberg Building
 Olympia, WA 98504

The Honorable Beth Doglio
 317 John L. O'Brien Building
 Olympia, WA 98504

The Honorable Norma Smith
 435 John L. O'Brien Building
 Olympia, WA 98504

The Honorable Gael Tarleton
 429A Legislative Building
 Olympia, WA 98504

The Honorable Zack Hudgins
 438A Legislative Building
 Olympia, WA 98504



RE: Capital budget funding for Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration program and support for Riverbend Floodplain Restoration Project on the Cedar River

Dear Honorable Senators and Representatives:

As Chair and Vice Chair of the Lake Washington/Cedar/Sammamish Watershed (WRIA 8) Salmon Recovery Council we were very heartened to learn of the proviso to fund the Riverbend Floodplain Restoration Project on the Cedar River in the Senate's proposed capital budget for the Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration (PSAR) program. We thank you and deeply appreciate your support for this project, which is so important to salmon recovery in our watershed and Puget Sound.

The PSAR large capital project list reflects the results of a robust, scientifically-based review and ranking process to prioritize projects that contribute the greatest benefits to recovering Puget Sound Chinook salmon. Relying on the rigorous review and ranking process helps to ensure that funding decisions are based on the best available science, are most likely to produce the desired results, and maintain the credibility of and participation in this important program going forward.

Honorable Senators and Representatives

April 5, 2019

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We support the legislature fully funding the PSAR program at \$79.6 million; however, we encourage the Senate and House to negotiate a level of PSAR funding (\$51.4 million) in the budget that adheres to the ranked list of large capital projects and funds at least the top three ranked projects, including Riverbend (ranked #3). The Riverbend project, and other priority projects on the PSAR list, are vital restoration actions that address major issues such as dams, disconnected floodplains, and low instream flows, to increase the abundance of salmon for our ailing and endangered Southern Resident Orca. Now is the time to make these important investments in salmon habitat restoration.

WRIA 8 includes Lake Washington, Lake Sammamish and all the rivers and streams flowing into them, as well as the Lake Washington Ship Canal through which all of “our” salmon must pass. This, of course, includes the Ballard Locks, where the viewing windows attract thousands of visitors each summer and fall hoping to catch a glimpse of returning salmon. Funding the Riverbend project and other habitat restoration investments ensure we can continue to have this important cultural and regional icon coming back to our local rivers and streams each fall.

The Cedar River Chinook population is the largest and highest priority population of Chinook salmon in the watershed, but returns are still well below recovery targets with less than 900 fish estimated to have returned in 2018. Floodplain restoration, like the Riverbend project, is the most important action to improve habitat for young salmon and to increase salmon survival in the Cedar River. Where floodplains have been restored, we know that juvenile and adult salmon immediately make use of the calmer waters and refuge opportunities they provide.

The Riverbend project will restore 52 acres of floodplain – making it the largest floodplain restoration project on the Cedar River to date once completed. The project will achieve 40% of WRIA 8’s 10-year floodplain habitat restoration goal, a major step toward recovering Chinook salmon in the watershed. Given the urgency to support survival of the Southern Resident Orca population, the project is also timely since it can be completed and begin to produce results in the form of increased Chinook abundance as food for the orca. This multiple benefit project also significantly reduces flood risk to State Route 169, the Cedar River Trail, and neighboring property owners.

We appreciate the challenges involved in making state budget decisions and applaud your leadership. Thank you again for your support for funding the Riverbend project and the PSAR program, which advances Washington State’s commitment to salmon recovery and restoring the health of Puget Sound.

Sincerely,



John Stokes
Chair, WRIA 8 Salmon Recovery Council
Councilmember, City of Bellevue



Mark Phillips
Vice-Chair, WRIA 8 Salmon Recovery Council
Councilmember, City of Lake Forest Park

cc: WRIA 8 Salmon Recovery Council members
Jay Manning, Chair, Puget Sound Leadership Council
David Troutt, Chair, Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Council
Sheida Sahandy, Executive Director, Puget Sound Partnership
Kaleen Cottingham, Director, Recreation and Conservation Office