

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

The Honorable Chellie Pingree  
Chairwoman  
Committee on Appropriations,  
Subcommittee on Interior,  
Environment, and Related Agencies  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable David Joyce  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Appropriations,  
Subcommittee on Interior,  
Environment, and Related Agencies  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

April 29, 2022

Dear Chairwoman Pingree and Ranking Member Joyce:

Thank you for your continued support for protecting and improving the Puget Sound. The Puget Sound is a critical environmental resource and economic engine for Washington state. As we saw during the heat domes of June and August last year, it is also in peril, and it is imperative that we scale up efforts to enhance resiliency, restore habitat, invest in clean water, and rebuild coastal ecosystems. That is why we need continued strong funding for the Puget Sound Geographic Program, which invests in these outcomes as well as environmental research and monitoring and support for jobs and industries around the region. **Accordingly, we respectfully request \$50 million for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Puget Sound Geographic Program in the Fiscal Year 2023 Interior and Environment Appropriations bill.**

The Puget Sound region's ecological diversity is pivotal to our local economies. Over 3,000 invertebrate species call the region home, among them the clams, oysters, and mussels which make Washington the nation's leading producer of farmed shellfish. This industry alone directly creates nearly 3,000 jobs in WA and supports tens of thousands more, contributing approximately \$270 million to the economy. The maritime economy in Washington, which includes fishing, ports, shipping, and more, accounts for nearly 150,000 jobs and \$30 billion in economic impact. In addition, the Puget Sound is critical to the way of life for 19 federally recognized tribes, including 17 with tribal treaty rights. These tribes have long relied on the bounty of the Puget Sound as the foundation of their economy and as an important source of culture.

This source of ecological diversity and cultural wellspring is under serious threat, endangering the livelihood for hundreds of thousands of Washington residents. Nearby population growth and highways have led to toxic pollutant runoff into Puget Sound, contaminating shorelines and estuary basins. Record high temperatures are estimated to have killed over one billion small sea creatures and decimated the Washington aquaculture industry. Seventy percent of Puget Sound

habitats have been lost or damaged, leading to several key species of salmon and trout to be classified as “Threatened” and the Southern Resident Killer Whale as “Endangered” under the Endangered Species Act. These species are fundamental to the ecosystem, the economy, and the identity of all Western Washington. They are also of significant cultural and societal importance to tribes. Strong federal funding is needed to arrest this environmental degradation.

The Puget Sound Geographic Program has been a key source of local funding, supporting restoration and research projects across the region. Thanks to partnerships with localities and other federal agencies, Puget Sound Geographic Program funding has unlocked a remarkable \$25 from partners and other agencies for every \$1 it invests, a tremendous return on investment. By distributing grants and working with state, local, and tribal governments to enact these important programs, the EPA has been able to have a meaningful impact on ecosystem conditions in the Puget Sound. From improving water quality to rebuilding salmon habitats to cleaning and restoring shorelines, the work funded by the Puget Sound Geographic Program is instrumental to our region’s future.

Past funding through the Puget Sound Geographic Program has allowed localities to limit environmental degradation impacts. However, the ecological situation is still critical; more funding is needed to recover and restore the Puget Sound.

The Puget Sound is a massive economic engine in Washington and a national ecological treasure. These funds are an investment in the past, present, and future of Western Washington. They are used to create jobs, preserve critical ecosystems, and secure the cultural and societal heritage of our region. Prioritizing the restoration and rehabilitation of the Puget Sound must be a priority.

Sincerely,



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Marilyn Strickland  
Member of Congress



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Adam Smith  
Member of Congress



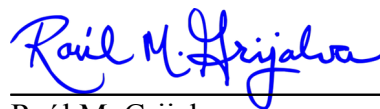
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Kim Schrier, M.D.  
Member of Congress



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Suzan K. DelBene  
Member of Congress



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Raúl M. Grijalva  
Member of Congress



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Peter A. DeFazio  
Member of Congress



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Rick Larsen  
Member of Congress



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Pramila Jayapal  
Member of Congress