

U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

June 30, 2022

Dear President Balducci, Vice President Erickson, and members of the Puget Sound Regional Council Executive Board,

Thank you for your leadership coordinating the development of the Puget Sound region as our communities continue to grow and change. As you consider strategies for using the new federal resources from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), I urge you to think comprehensively about approaches which best position the Puget Sound region for growth while incorporating critical environmental mitigation tools, particularly around stormwater filtration and mitigation of 6PPD-quinone, into bridge and roadway design. The following actions are critical steps to accomplishing this shared goal:

- Use the wide variety of federal resources currently available to proactively integrate stormwater mitigation measures into current and existing infrastructure design.
- Take advantage of expertise across government departments to find the most effective, most efficient solutions.
- Connect with regional experts on ecotoxicology and stormwater to leverage our region's position as a global leader on this issue.

As you know, 6PPD-quinone is a chemical created when a common-used antiozonant in tires interacts with the road surface. During rainstorms, this toxic chemical runs into nearby streams and enters the local aquatic ecosystem. There is evidence to suggest that 6PPD-quinone has negative effects on multiple species of salmon, but the effect is most pronounced on coho. A 2020 study on the effects of 6PPD-quinone on coho showed that exposure leads to death within hours.

We are at an important moment in the future of our region – the funding authorized by Congress through the BIL, from road construction and modification to culvert removal to rebuilding water systems, will direct the growth and development of Washington state for decades to come. I thank you for building stormwater mitigation elements into your 2022-2050 Regional Planning Document and for your acknowledgement of the dangers posed by 6PPD-quinone. As you move from planning to implementation, I ask that these mitigation elements are incorporated into pending roadway projects as well as new construction and maintenance projects going forward. It is critical that the resources going towards rebuilding and expanding our infrastructure fully leverage co-benefits and take advantage of the opportunities this funding provides to build a more sustainable, ecologically viable transportation system.

Thanks to the BIL, we have the opportunity to incorporate effective mitigation strategies and best practices into roadway design to address the crisis posed by 6PPD-quinone now, before the issue gets worse. Coho are a critical part of the Pacific Northwest ecosystem, a linchpin of Tribal treaty rights, and are inextricably linked to Pacific Northwest culture. In addition, a continued decline in coho salmon population could lead to listing coho under the Endangered Species Act, triggering environmental mitigation requirements. By incorporating mitigation into key spots along roadways, we can give coho the best chance at thriving, avoid having to retroactively address these concerns in our transportation systems, and take advantage of the wealth of resources currently available.

Given the multifaceted challenges which stormwater runoff poses, only a whole-of-government approach to mitigating its effects can successfully address this crisis. The State of Washington and many local governments have dedicated environmental divisions with experience developing watershed recovery and estuary protection projects. As I, as your Member of Congress, work to synthesize restoration efforts at the federal level, I strongly urge you to take advantage of the full scope of government experience by bringing together the expertise of transportation planners, environmental mitigation and stormwater experts, and scientists alike to develop the best, most effective techniques for protecting salmon in the Puget Sound.

Furthermore, we are fortunate to have world leaders in our own backyards whose expertise we can draw on to address these challenges. In particular, the teams at the Center for Urban Waters and the Washington Stormwater Center have been at the forefront for worldwide research into 6PPD and studies on mitigation elements. Scientists at the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)'s Northwest Fisheries Science Center have been instrumental in laying the foundation for the research which has led to these findings and in plotting 6PPD-quinone runoff hotspots across Puget Sound. I encourage you to reach out to these and other subject matter experts to identify best practices for mitigating the harmful effects of 6PPD-quinone and other toxic chemicals in our streams and waterways.

Again, thank you for all the work that you do helping to ensure that the Puget Sound region remains a place where people and our natural environment can thrive together. I look forward to continuing to work with you to build a sustainable, vibrant Puget Sound in the years to come.

Sincerely,



Marilyn Strickland
Member of Congress

Cc: Washington State Department of Transportation

Cc: Washington State Department of Ecology