

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

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, and we request that you continue strong funding for the Puget Sound Geographic Program, which invests in ecological preservation, 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 2022 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 marine 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. 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 \$24 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 funding by the Puget Sound Geographic System is pivotal to our region's future.

Past funding through the Puget Sound Geographic System 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. Restoring the Puget Sound's health must be a priority for Washington and for our nation.

Sincerely,



Marilyn Strickland
Member of Congress

Additional Signatories:

_____/s/_____
Suzan DelBene
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____
Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____
Rick Larsen
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____
Kim Schrier, M.D.
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____
Adam Smith
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____
Peter DeFazio
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____
Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress