Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 17, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, U.S. Capitol Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
S-230, U.S. Capitol Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Yarmuth
Chairman
House Committee on Budget
204-E Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Bernie Sanders
Chairman
Senate Committee on Budget
624 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader Schumer, Chair Yarmuth, and Chair Sanders,

We thank you for your leadership this Congress in advancing priorities critical to our constituents and the American people. We write to express our strong support to reverse the steep decline in the salmon population and ask you to include at least **$1,525,000** in funding in the reconciliation package for further research on the chemical from tires and recycled rubber killing salmon in the Pacific Northwest.

Salmon are a keystone species and an economic engine in Washington state. Salmon nourish our streams and forests, support tribal treaty rights, feed our orcas and dozens of other species, and create jobs – salmon fishing alone creates over $100 million in annual economic activity in Washington, and salmon are the linchpin behind our state's fishing industry, which brings in over $1.1 billion and provides over 16,000 jobs.

Biologists have observed coho salmon dying from mysterious symptoms in Pacific Northwest urban streams for decades. However, it is only in the past year that a team of scientists from the University of Washington's Center for Urban Waters and Washington State University's Washington Stormwater Center discovered the cause: a toxic chemical called 6PPD-quinone, created when a commonly used antiozonant in tires interacts with ozone. This chemical runs into local streams when it rains, entering the bloodstream of coho salmon and killing them.

On July 15th, Dr. Jenifer McIntyre, one of the study's lead researchers, discussed her research at a Committee on Natural Resources hearing. Dr. McIntyre spoke at length on the 20 year, $5 million process of arriving at their significant finding. She also highlighted how little we still know about 6PPD-quinone and the importance of further research on its impact on other species and in other geographies. In discussions we have had with other members of the research team, the message has been equally clear: we must let science lead the way in determining the full impact of 6PPD-quinone and how we can find a long-lasting solution to the dangers it poses.

Also testifying at the hearing was David Troutt, Director of Natural Resources for the Nisqually Indian Tribe. Like many tribes in Washington and throughout the Pacific Northwest, salmon are more than a resource for the Nisqually; salmon and the river are the wellspring of their culture and fundamental to the Nisqually way of life. When Director Troutt was asked about the impact that the continuously decreasing population of salmon has on his tribe, he did not mince words.

> "This is already having a devastating impact to our community. In 1987, we were fishing 105 days a year. As of 2015, that has been reduced to 8 days… and if the coho populations continue to decline, I'm afraid 8 days will go down to no days. That will have a devastating impact on our community, disconnecting them from the place they've been for 10,000 years."

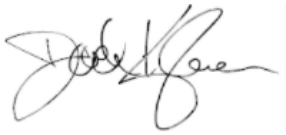
We cannot afford to wait another 20 years for science to find the answers we need. We need to provide dedicated funding to support this critical research today. After consultation with experts on this issue, we therefore request that the following be included in Region 10 of the Environmental Protection Agency's National Estuary Program account in the final reconciliation package:

- **$900,000** for researchers, staff, laboratory instrumentation, and computational resources to sharpen laboratory-based surveillance methods to conduct further research on the occurrence and impacts of novel consumer product chemicals in U.S. coastal waters. This investment will support a regional scientific capacity of critical importance to the Puget Sound recovery effort and provide nationally important leadership in advancing the necessary transition to environmentally safe consumer chemicals.
- **$250,000** to study the impacts of tire chemicals on aquatic species in U.S. coastal waters. Although the tire chemical break-down product 6PPD-quinone has been found to be toxic to Coho salmon, we don't know if this or related chemicals are toxic to other organisms. This funding will be used to evaluate the toxicity of 6PPD and 6PPD-quinone to keystone aquatic species of the Pacific Northwest, including salmon, forage fishes, and aquatic invertebrates, to determine their susceptibility to these chemicals.
- **$250,000** to develop and refine stormwater treatment technologies for the removal of 6PPD and 6PPD-quinone from stormwater. Although limited data show that rain gardens will remove the toxic components of stormwater to coho salmon, the mechanism of this removal is not known. This funding will be used to study technologies and filtration systems which can remove these chemicals from stormwater prior to environmental release.
- **$125,000** to empower communities, and in particular historically underrepresented communities, with accessible Puget Sound simulation modeling tools. These tools will help individuals and community groups contribute to solving challenging societal decisions about the future of our region.

Including dedicated funding to accelerate research into this toxic chemical in the reconciliation package is an essential part of our coordinated strategy to recover salmon, uphold our treaty and trust obligations to tribal nations, and ensure that our children can enjoy the same extraordinary ecology and biodiversity that makes the Pacific Northwest unique.

Sincerely,

Marilyn Strickland
Member of Congress



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