

February 14, 2019

To: Washington State Legislators

For decades, people across our state have worked together to increase salmon populations and improve salmon habitat. We have had some success, but it is clear we are not making the progress necessary to return salmon populations to a healthy and sustainable level.

This is why we are disappointed by the Governor's proposed budget. This budget does not reflect salmon and orca as a priority for Washington state.

The Governor's request of \$90 million in state funding for the Salmon Recovery Funding Board, the Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration fund, and the Estuary and Salmon Restoration Program is identical to the request two years ago and \$10 million less than four years ago.

Rather than making salmon recovery a priority, funding for salmon recovery is actually losing ground in both real and relative terms.

This failure to support salmon recovery comes at a time when salmon recovery efforts are even more critical. According to the Puget Sound Partnership's Vital Signs, the Chinook salmon population is below the 2020 target and not improving. The plight of the Southern-resident Killer Whales is dramatic evidence of that failure. As the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office's recent "State of the Salmon" report notes, "In most of the state, salmon numbers are below recovery goals."

Funding should be increased to cover the projects that are ready and have been scientifically prioritized.

- Funding for PSAR should be increased from the current \$42.5 million to \$79.6 million to fully fund all projects that are ready to move forward. This additional funding would also unlock \$11 million in local matching funds.
- State funding for the Salmon Recovery Funding Board should be increased from the proposed \$35 million in state funds, to the \$89 million requested.
- Funding for the Estuary and Salmon Restoration Program should be increased to \$20 million from the Governor's proposed funding level of \$12.5 million to cover more of the proposed project list.
- The Floodplains by Design program should meet the requested \$70 million, to provide help for salmon, reduce flood risks, and offer assistance to farmers.

This would provide an additional \$125.8 million for critical and already prioritized salmon recovery projects. This amounts to about 2 percent of the increased funding available in the Capital and Operating budgets without tax increases. If salmon recovery is truly a priority for Washington state, this is a reasonable and necessary increase.

Sincerely,

Bill Blake and
Pat Stevenson, Co-Chairs
Stillaguamish Watershed Council

Paul Mccollum
Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe

Rodney Pond
Sound Salmon Solutions

Hansi Hals, Natural Resources
Director
Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe

Todd Myers, Environmental
Director
Washington Policy Center

David Troutt, Natural Resources
Director
Nisqually Indian Tribe

Jim Wilcox, Member
Puget Sound Partnership
Leadership Council