

Written Testimony of David D. Dicks

Executive Director

Puget Sound Partnership

david.Dicks@psp.wa.gov

(360) 725 -5454

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Chairmen Boxer and Cardin, Ranking Member Crapo, and members of the committee, I thank you for the opportunity to discuss with you legislative approaches to protecting, preserving, and restoring our great water bodies in the United States, including Puget Sound.

I am the Executive Director of the Puget Sound Partnership (Partnership) a cabinet agency of the State of Washington created in 2007 to lead the overall effort to restore and protect Puget Sound by 2020. The Partnership is also a broader coalition of citizens, governments, tribes, scientists and businesses working together to restore and protect Puget Sound.

Puget Sound

Puget Sound is a national treasure, with 2,500 miles of shoreline, 14 major rivers, and thousands of streams. Literally hundreds of species of wildlife and marine life call it home. The region is also home to over 100 cities, twelve counties, and 19 Indian Tribes. In all, over 4 million people consider Puget Sound home and we are expecting to welcome an estimated 1.5 million more people by 2025. Our population growth rate is nearly twice the national average.

The growth of our population and infrastructure has put immense pressure on the Sound. Salmon runs have dwindled – scientists believe 15 runs of salmon are extinct, with total population levels at 10% of their historic level. The iconic killer whale is the most contaminated mammal species on earth and (along with salmon) is listed under that Endangered Species Act. In urban areas such as Seattle and Tacoma, the loss of salt marsh habitats is close to 100 percent.

Without a concerted effort to protect the remaining pristine habitats, clean up pollution, and restore vital ecosystems, we cannot hope to maintain or improve the health of the our region. Our vibrant resource economy, clean water, recreational opportunities, everyday quality of life, and our children's legacy are all threatened. The stakes are high and failure is not an option.

The Puget Sound Partnership

Governor Gregoire recognized early in her administration that the ecological health of Puget Sound is at a touch point: we either enact a visionary solution to our current problems or we risk losing the crown jewel of the region forever. In 2005, the governor launched a new, reinvigorated effort to save the Sound. The effort focused on action and implementation, with the goal of restoring Puget Sound to health by the year 2020. In 2007, the governor and state legislature created a new state agency, the Puget Sound Partnership, to work with federal, tribal, local government, watershed and non-governmental partners to achieve this goal.

We have made substantial progress. In just two years we have created the Action Agenda – a single, unified, scientifically based, and prioritized plan that the entire region embraces and is implementing. The Action Agenda represents a new way of approaching the management of Puget Sound. It takes an ecosystem approach from the crest of the Cascade and Olympic Mountains to the waters of the Strait of Juan de Fuca and Hood Canal. The Action Agenda integrates scientific assessment with community priorities. It establishes a unified, prioritized set of actions that are needed to protect and restore Puget Sound. It serves as a statement of common purpose across the Sound, forming the basis for cooperation and collaboration among implementing partners.

We are also building a “best of class” accountability and performance management system. It will enable us to prove to the public that their money is being spent wisely, that the Action Agenda is working, and to adaptively manage course corrections. We have studied and learned from the recommendations of the Government Accountability Office in their audits of other ecosystem recovery efforts. This system will enable us to demonstrate that we are doing the things we committed to, and that we are doing the right things to bring back the health of the region. It will also allow us to get started on urgent projects, while refining our strategies and actions as we gather new information.

Building citizen support for our efforts will also be crucial. To this end, the Partnership has teamed up with over 300 local governments to launch a coordinated public awareness campaign called “Puget Sound Starts Here.” This effort brought the previously fragmented efforts for pollution prevention education into a coordinated effort to engage the public. This campaign takes a targeted approach, focusing on the lifestyle changes identified as having the largest impact on water quality and which research has shown individuals are likely to make.

In short we have a plan, we have an accountability system, and we are relying on the input of those most directly affected in local communities to guide our effort.

Political Will

We also have something less tangible but perhaps more important: political will. To accomplish something as monumental as restoring the health of a place like Puget Sound, the planets need to align. An opportunity like this happens only rarely, and that opportunity is upon us. Our governor, legislature and congressional delegation have made Puget Sound a top priority. Senator Cantwell's presence here today is evidence of this. Administrator Jackson noted this unusual level of political buy-in during a recent visit to Seattle, when she noted during a radio interview, "I sat yesterday with the Puget Sound Partnership and I was really taken with the high level of involvement of elected officials." We have a shot in Puget Sound to do what no one has yet accomplished: to restore to health a major ecosystem. But we need your help.

Enhancing the Federal Role

Puget Sound is a long way from Washington, DC and it may not be obvious from here why the federal government should do more for our estuary by creating a Puget Sound program office in EPA. Why is this a priority for national attention? Puget Sound needs and merits additional national focus and involvement for at least four reasons:

1. The Puget Sound is Part of an International Marine Ecosystem

Working in from the Pacific Ocean, the international border runs right down the middle of the Strait of Juan de Fuca, threads through the San Juan and Gulf Islands, and hits the mainland just south of the Fraser River, by far the largest river flowing into the international Sound and Straits area. Neither the water nor the wildlife pays any attention to this boundary. Untreated sewage from Victoria, British Columbia spews out into the Strait of Juan de Fuca. "Our" orca whales cross the border multiple times almost every day during most of the year, eating salmon of both nationalities. Oil spills hit both sides, regardless of where they start. EPA has played an important role in maintaining open lines of communication across the border, where Canadian federal agencies are key players. Over time, it is going to become increasingly important for the US and Canada to address Puget Sound issues together. We in Washington work well with our Canadian counterparts but clearly there is a need for a Federal presence to truly engage with Canada at the highest levels.

2. The federal government is a major landowner in Puget Sound

Through its military installations, National Parks and Wildlife Refuges, and National Forests *federal agencies manage over 40% of the land in the Puget Sound basin*. Given that our effort stretches from the snowcaps of the Olympic and Cascade Mountains to the whitecaps of the Sound we simply can not succeed without the full cooperation and participation of the federal government. It goes without saying that federal agencies' policies and programs are crucial to the Sound, from the Corps of Engineers' permitting responsibility to the US Geological Survey's scientific studies. But the

extraordinary amount of direct ownership and activity makes it essential for EPA's Puget Sound role to be sustained at a high level.

3. Federal Species and Resources

Puget Sound's federally-listed endangered species are at the heart of the matter. Southern Resident orca whales, Puget Sound chinook salmon, Puget Sound steelhead, bull trout, and Hood Canal chum salmon are all federally-listed species. Their fate is the fate of Puget Sound itself. In listing these species, the federal government (through NOAA and USFWS) has taken on a special responsibility for their recovery. Further, there are many other species in severely depleted condition in the Sound. Heightening the federal role in saving the Sound could prevent these species from being listed in the future, resulting in significant savings. We will only recover these species if we recover the Puget Sound ecosystem that they rely on.

4. Durability

As our board chairman Bill Ruckelshaus has often stated we must stay everlastingly diligent in our efforts to protect Puget Sound. This legislation will ensure that the Federal Government will stay involved and focused on Puget Sound. It took us decades to degrade the Sound, and it will take an equally long time to bring it back. Putting the institutions in place to accomplish this at the federal, state and local level, and giving them the tools and resources to accomplish the task, are essential to our success.

The Puget Sound Recovery Act of 2010

This committee has before it S.2739, sponsored by Senator Cantwell, co-sponsored by Senator Murray. S. 2739 is a bill that will position and empower the Federal Government to join and augment the monumental collaborative efforts underway in the region by creating a Puget Sound program office within EPA. There are a number of regional estuary initiatives for which the Congress has provided additional authority for Federal engagement, including the Great Lakes, Long Island Sound and Lake Champlain. The Chesapeake has legacy authority that is comparable to the others.

The program office envisioned in this legislation needs to work somewhat differently than in most of the other situations. There are two reasons for this: 1) other water bodies commonly border more than one state, suggesting the need for a major federal role to convene the stakeholders; and 2) they also began at a time when the stakeholders had not yet assessed the problems and developed the plans for clean up.

In contrast, Puget Sound exists in just one State and that State already has taken the lead through the Puget Sound Partnership in preparing a detailed assessment of the Sound's condition and a plan for

its recovery. S. 2739, therefore, takes a new approach that would provide the national attention and strong federal involvement that is needed while supporting the state's leadership and existing stakeholder effort. The governance of the Partnership itself meets the requirements in the NEP for a diverse, broadly representative "management conference" and the Action Agenda has been formally approved by EPA as the "comprehensive conservation and management plan" under the NEP. Federal support will be tethered to the Agenda's priorities and therefore result in greater coordination and leverage for both State and Federal efforts.

The bill preserves an appropriate independent role for the EPA Administrator, including: approval of the adequacy of the Agenda as currently drafted and subsequently amended; participating in the work of the Partnership along with other stakeholders; retaining a requirement for non Federal funding to match Federal support; and creating a formal mechanism to coordinate the engagement of the relevant federal agencies with the Partnership. The Administrator and the Executive Director of the Puget Sound Partnership, acting jointly, would submit to Congress a report that summarizes the progress made in implementing the comprehensive plan and progress towards achieving the identified goals and objectives described in the Action Agenda. We believe that S. 2739 achieves an excellent balance – it augments the federal role and presence while supporting the good work and leadership role of the Puget Sound Partnership.

Conclusion

We in Washington State greatly appreciate the efforts of this committee to fashion legislation that will put the federal government on a course to play a major supportive role in the restoration of Puget Sound. It is critical to our success.

Thank you again for holding this hearing and for your attention to restoring the great water bodies of the nation. I would be glad to answer any questions or assist your efforts in any way possible.