

PUGET SOUND DAY ON THE HILL THANK YOU



Dear partners and friends,

Thank you for doing your part in making Puget Sound Day on the Hill 2007 a success. The feedback we've received has been all positive, and I am proud of the great work our group was able to accomplish. Here's a quick recap of the event and its highlights:

- ▶ Nearly 60 partners from Puget Sound gathered in Washington D.C. to inform decision-makers about the importance of Puget Sound protection and recovery.
- ▶ Conversations took place with 11 members of Congress and 9 senior Congressional staff (from the House and the Senate). Our Puget Sound Congressional Caucus, Congressmen Heck and Kilmer, welcomed us personally, and a lucky few can now claim to have participated in the coveted night tour of the Capitol by Congressman Kilmer.
- ▶ We had the opportunity to inaugurate the newly formed national Congressional Estuary Caucus. As of this writing, some 35 members have joined this caucus.
- ▶ Several tribal representatives honored us with their participation. Their critical voice and articulation of treaty rights underscored and cemented the importance of protecting and recovering Puget Sound.
- ▶ A few of our meetings were attended and observed by federal agency staff (EPA, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Office of Management & Budget and the Congressional Research Service).
- ▶ With the support of The Nature Conservancy, a website (<https://pugetsoundinnovationstories.blog/>) was created to share the many great recovery projects taking place around the Sound—and the partners who are making them happen. The Nature Conservancy sponsored creation of a “coffee table” book of selected stories, generated from the website and offered to the people with whom we met.
- ▶ Dr. Joseph Gaydos, of The SeaDoc Society, donated copies of the stunning *The Salish Sea, Jewel of the Pacific Northwest*. This book allowed us to more effectively share the wonders of our Puget Sound with elected officials who have the misfortune of living elsewhere. <http://www.seadocsociety.org/salish-sea-book/>.
- ▶ As of this writing, 148 people and organizations have signed onto a letter of support to key congressional and senate subcommittee chairs and ranking members.





- ▶ The Governor of the State of Washington, Jay Inslee, wrote a letter of support for the messages we carried to Congress.
- ▶ Governor Inslee also shared a letter of support, along with the governors of the states of California, Oregon, Idaho and Alaska, regarding the Pacific Coast Salmon Recovery Fund.

During this trip, we received some great news that Congress had approved an omnibus bill that extends the federal support for programs critical to the work of protecting and recovering Puget Sound. Specifically, the Puget Sound Geographic program, the National Estuary Program, and the Pacific Coast Salmon Recovery programs will be held at existing levels until the end of the federal fiscal year. This is in stark contrast to the President's proposed budget, which would have eliminated federal funding for all these programs.

Even though the omnibus bill included a 1 percent cut to the EPA budget, a specific provision was inserted to ensure that the NEP program would be held harmless from these cuts. Most notably, legislators shared with us that the protection of the EPA funds was a "direct result" of last year's Puget Sound Day on the Hill. I personally asked every single person with whom I met, "What can we do to help you protect Puget Sound?" The unanimous answer: keep doing exactly what we were doing in communicating the Puget Sound Day on the Hill messages.

Last but not least, we celebrated that other key programs supporting our collective efforts those specific to tribes as well as the SeaGrant program—are also designated to continue through the end of the federal fiscal year.

So, to those who came and to those who took other steps to support this effort, I hope you share my sense of pride in what we are doing together. We have averted what could have been a terrible outcome and strengthened the foundations for future work. I am filled with great optimism that the strength and solidarity of our team will lift us to outcomes we must reach.

With warm gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Sheida R. Sahandy". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized 'S' at the beginning.

Sheida R. Sahandy,

Executive Director

Puget Sound Partnership