

July 26, 2021



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NOAA Restoration Center
1655 Heindon Road
Arcata, California 95521-4573

Puget Sound Partnership Proposal Review Panel
Puget Sound Partnership
PO BOX 40900
Olympia WA 98504

RE: Letter of support for culvert correction project

Dear Puget Sound Partnership Review Panel Members:

We are writing to strongly support the proposed Washington Sea Grant project entitled: "*Maximizing returns on investing in barrier culvert removal in Washington State*". Fish passage barrier identification, remediation and prioritization is a high priority for the NOAA Restoration Center (RC). Our involvement in fish passage includes funding barrier removal projects, working on the NMFS National Fish Passage Team, participating in the CA Fish Passage Forum, developing standardized monitoring protocols for fish passage projects and developing a barrier optimization tool (FISHPass) to help guide our restoration efforts.

Much like in California, thousands of fish passage barriers, primarily outdated culverts at road crossings, limit access to hundreds of miles of riparian salmon habitat throughout Western Washington. State agencies, local governments, and private landowners have accelerated the removal of these barriers in order to encourage the recovery of declining wild salmon stocks protected by legislation and tribal treaty rights. This project will provide tools to evaluate alternative barrier correction strategies that account for the diverse priorities of agencies and stakeholder groups. Such a tool will allow stakeholders and funding agencies to better communicate their priorities and evaluate tradeoffs using a consistent, science-based framework.

This project will build on lessons learned from existing fish passage planning tools like FISHPass and provide tailored features that address the unique challenges in Western Washington. By incorporating a multi-objective framework, the tools developed by the project team will provide a model for potential features in future versions of FISHPass and other fish passage planning tools. Based on our experience with the project team, we have full confidence that they will produce a first-class planning tool that will be valuable not only for stakeholders and resource managers in the Western Washington region but also for those working in fish passage policy throughout the country.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bob Pagliuco".

Bob Pagliuco
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