

August 02, 2021



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NOAA Restoration Center
7600 Sand Point Way NE
Seattle, Washington 98115

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:

I am writing to strongly support the proposed Puget Sound Partnership Integrated Social Ecological Systems project entitled: "*Maximizing returns on investing in barrier culvert removal in Washington State*". As a Marine Habitat Restoration Specialist with the NOAA Restoration Center in the Puget Sound region, my team regularly funds and provides support for habitat restoration projects to recover threatened and endangered salmon species. The NOAA Restoration Center's support of Puget Sound projects includes contributions to over 257 individual projects with over \$48M in funding during the 30 years of our existence. We work across jurisdictions to restore natural ecosystem processes in ways that improve community resilience to environmental change, including advising on projects that involve fish passage improvements.

Thousands of fish passage barriers, primarily outdated culverts at road crossings, limit access to hundreds of miles of riparian salmon habitat throughout Western Washington.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. The NOAA Restoration Center will be a beneficiary of these tools by using them to better demonstrate trade-offs between restoration action plans to partners and local entities which with we collaborate.

This project will build on lessons learned from existing fish passage planning tools 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 future planning tools that incorporate other restoration actions and scenarios. 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 that reads "Laurel Jennings".

Laurel Jennings
Marine Habitat Restoration Specialist
NOAA Restoration Center, Seattle, WA 98115
206-794-4761
Laurel.Jennings@noaa.gov

