



Puget Sound Partnership
PO BOX 40900
Olympia WA 98504

Dear Puget Sound Partnership Proposal Review Panel Members:

We are writing to strongly support the proposed Puget Sound Partnership project entitled: "Maximizing returns on investing in barrier culvert removal in Washington state."

As scientists at The Nature Conservancy, which has a mission to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends, we count on projects like this to improve our ability to craft enduring solutions to recover rivers. We work with other scientists and natural resource managers globally to better understand and address the complex problem of barriers to fish passage. The largest hurdle with stream barriers is the scale of the problem: millions of barriers in the US, and hundreds of millions of road stream crossings. Our intensive surveys found that 40% of road stream crossings are barriers to fish passage and stream function. The impact of this fragmentation is tragic; 67% of global freshwater migratory fish populations around the world have disappeared since 1970¹. Where there are barriers in rivers there are also growing human risks from infrastructure (e.g., dams and road) failures. To address this large-scale problem with limited dollars, it is critical to develop systems of prioritization that are both ecologically effective and socially equitable.

This global threat is just as acute in Washington, where culverts and other barriers limit access to hundreds of miles of riparian salmon habitat throughout the state. We have success in growing restoration programs in Maine and provide guidance to the European Commission and newly established European Open Rivers Programme (private funds for dam removal). We all experience similar challenges at an equally large scale. This project will develop valuable tools to evaluate alternative barrier removal strategies while accounting for diverse priorities of multiple agencies and communities. These tools will facilitate recovery of wild salmon stocks in Washington state, as well as benefitting rivers in Maine, Europe, and around the world.

Please reach out with additional questions.

Thank you!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Ailene Ettinger".

Ailene Ettinger
Quantitative Ecologist
Washington Chapter, The Nature Conservancy
74 Wall Street
Seattle, WA 98121

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Joshua L. Royte".

Joshua L. Royte
Senior Scientist
Maine Chapter and Europe Freshwater,
The Nature Conservancy
Brunswick, ME 04011

¹ Living Planet Index for Freshwater migratory fish (World Fish Migration Foundation 2020)