



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF ECOLOGY

PO Box 47600 • Olympia, WA 98504-7600 • 360-407-6000

711 for Washington Relay Service • Persons with a speech disability can call 877-833-6341

January 12, 2009

The Honorable Phil Rockefeller,
WA State Senate
Chair, Senate Environment, Water, and Energy Committee
P.O. Box 40466
Olympia, WA 98504-0466

The Honorable Dave Upthegrove,
WA State Representative
Chair, House Ecology and Parks Committee
P.O. Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

RE: Puget Sound Monitoring Consortium – Final Report

Dear Committee Chairs and Members:

I am pleased to transmit to you the final report and recommendations recently submitted to me by the Puget Sound Monitoring Consortium (Consortium). I believe that the coordinated monitoring and assessment program they recommend transitioning to in the 2009-2011 biennium is urgently needed. The program has potential to realize efficiencies in how we collect and interpret environmental data, and, at the same time, improve the credibility and usefulness of the data.

The Department of Ecology (Ecology) was tasked by the legislature with supporting a multi-party effort to create a coordinated monitoring program for Puget Sound. Representatives of about 40 entities including state and federal agencies, the business community, tribes, environmental organizations, and local governments enthusiastically participated in the effort. Ecology provided staffing to support the effort and participated as a member of the Consortium.

The Consortium members were motivated by a shared belief that we need a new business model for conducting environmental monitoring and assessment activities. With the establishment of the Puget Sound Partnership (Partnership) and recent adoption of the Puget Sound Action Agenda, we have a tremendous window of opportunity to implement a regional program here.

The Honorable Phil Rockefeller
The Honorable Dave Upthegrove
January 12, 2009
Page No. 2

The Consortium researched programs around the country, such as the San Francisco Estuary Institute and Chesapeake Bay Program, and learned from their experiences before developing specific recommendations for a program structure suited to the unique interests and conditions in Puget Sound.

Wisely, in this time of challenging budgeting and limited resources, the Consortium is not requesting new funding from the state to implement its near-term recommendations. Consistent with the Action Agenda, we expect the Partnership to make several important decisions by the end of the current biennium, including determining the organizational model that will house the monitoring program for Puget Sound ecosystem recovery. We also expect the Partnership to integrate the Consortium's work and projects into the Puget Sound Science Panel's emerging science program. These are necessary next steps for creating a regional monitoring and assessment program for Puget Sound that is coordinated among all implementing agencies, integrated across the myriad topics of interest to ecosystem recovery, and makes more effective use of resources.

The Consortium presented its recommendations to the Washington Forum on Monitoring Salmon Recovery and Watershed Health and to the Puget Sound Science Panel (Panel) in December, 2008. The presentation was well-received, and the Panel directed Partnership staff to take important next steps toward implementing the recommendations in the report.

If you have any questions about the Consortium or the recommendations in the report, please contact Karen Dinicola of my staff at kdin461@ecy.wa.gov / (360) 407-6550.

Sincerely,



Jay J. Manning,
Director

Enclosures

cc: David Dicks, Executive Director, Puget Sound Partnership
Joel Baker, Chair, Puget Sound Science Panel
Bill Wilkerson, Chair, Washington Forum on Monitoring Salmon Recovery and Watershed Health
Puget Sound Monitoring Consortium Governance Committee Members