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COMMITTEE, WASHINGTON STATE CHAPTER OF THE SIERRA CLUB • EMERALD
WATER ANGLERS • FRIENDS OF THE EARTH • DUWAMISH RIVER CLEANUP
COALITION/TAG**

April 11, 2014

Honorable Governor Jay Inslee
P.O. Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

Maia Bellon
Director, Washington Department of Ecology
P.O. Box 47600
Olympia, WA 98504-7600

Via Email & U.S. Mail

RE: Support for Health-Protective Water Quality Standards without Loopholes

Dear Honorable Governor Inslee and Director Bellon,

We, the undersigned organizations, businesses, and the Duwamish Tribe, write to express our strong support for protective, accurate water quality standards to protect public health. From Puget Sound to the Columbia River—and in countless other waterbodies across the state—catching and eating local fish and shellfish is a quintessential part of being a Washingtonian. Yet Washington’s human health water quality standards are among the nation’s least protective. As a result, the state is not doing its job to prevent cancer-causing pollutants from entering our state’s rivers and Puget Sound.

We are asking you to change this. By setting strong and accurate standards the state can reduce the amount of pollution industry and cities discharge to waterways—a critical step toward

reducing cancer-causing pollutants in fish and shellfish. Fish advisories telling people to limit or not eat fish are not a fair or healthy solution.

We are also asking the Governor's Office and Ecology to reject industry-backed proposals to gut the effectiveness of accurate, protective water quality standards. The overarching purpose of adopting new water quality standards is to improve water quality and the health of people who regularly eat fish. We are deeply concerned that the "regulatory tools" currently on the table will, instead, result in more toxic pollution in Puget Sound and waterbodies across the state.

Industry already benefits from various loopholes that excuse or delay compliance with water quality standards. These include toxic mixing zones, compliance schedules, variances, use attainability analyses, site-specific criteria, and water quality offsets. For example, toxic mixing zones are areas where industry and cities are allowed to discharge high levels of toxins in the hope they will be "mixed" and "diluted" in the water downstream. The most toxic chemicals cannot be effectively diluted. As Ecology's own reports demonstrate, many dangerous toxins like PCBs, dioxins and mercury build up and accumulate in the fish we eat, sometimes many miles from the source.

The current rulemaking should not expand existing loopholes or introduce new loopholes into Washington law. Specifically, the Governor's Office and Ecology should reject proposals aimed at:

1. Increasing the number of people at risk from toxic pollution by using a risk level that is less protective than 10^{-6} .
2. Increasing the availability of variances through multi-discharger and statewide variances.
3. Providing for "intake credits." Many of these pollutants are toxic even in very small amounts and many of them build up in fish and shellfish.
4. Allowing the PCB water quality standard to become **less protective**. PCB's are cancer-causing and so toxic they were banned in the 1970s but are still in some polluters' discharges.
5. Giving polluters decades to decrease and end their toxic pollution even though the Clean Water Act directed toxic pollution to end in the 1980s.

As organizations with hundreds of thousands of members and businesses that rely on clean water, we urge you to make disease prevention and safe fish and shellfish a priority for this state. Stand on the side of public health: Reject industries' math games and loopholes in favor of accurate, protective human health water quality standards.

Sincerely,

Brett VandenHeuvel
Columbia Riverkeeper

Bart Mihailovich
Spokane Riverkeeper

Steve Seymour
Drayton Harbor Community Oyster Farm

LeeAnne Beres
Earth Ministry

Mark Riskedahl
Northwest Environmental Defense Center

Stephen Trinkaus
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Clayton Burrows
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Sue Patnude
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Susan Albert
Owner, Pepper Sisters Restaurant

Paul Kuepfer
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Janet Marino
Whatcom Peace and Justice Center

Jonathan Stumpf
Wild Steelhead Coalition

Captain Keith Robbins
A Spot Tail Salmon Guide

Chris Wilke
Puget Soundkeeper Alliance

Wendy Steffensen
North Sound Baykeeper

Kim Abel
League of Woman Voters of Washington

Fred Marinkovich
Puget Sound Harvestors Association

Mike Petersen
The Lands Council

Joseph Bogaard
Save our Wild Salmon

Zach Tyler, Owner and General
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Suzanne Skinner
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Amy Carey
Sound Action

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Community to Community Development

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WA State Chapter Sierra Club

Dave McCoy
Emerald Water Anglers

Fred Felleman, Northwest Consultant
Friends of the Earth

Bj Cummings
Duwamish River Cleanup Coalition/TAG

cc:

Dennis McClerran, Region 10, EPA
Billy Frank, Jr., Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission
Paul Lumley, Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission