

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

January 28, 2020

The Honorable Aurelia Skipwith  
Director  
United States Fish and Wildlife Service  
1849 C Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Director Skipwith:

We are writing to express our support for the collaborative process led by Washington state's Office of Chehalis Basin and the Chehalis Basin Board that aims to reduce flood-related damages and restore aquatic species habitat in the Chehalis River Basin. Over the last century, the basin has experienced catastrophic flooding and declining salmon runs with increasing frequency and intensity. The piecemeal approach taken by federal, state, local, and tribal entities to address these problems in the past has proven unsuccessful, and underscore the need for a holistic, collaborative approach.

We are encouraged that for the first time a comprehensive, science-driven process is moving forward and examining thorough plans to address both flooding and habitat restoration simultaneously. The Washington State Legislature has appropriated more than \$220 million toward this effort over the last four budget cycles, including \$73 million for the FY 2019 – FY 2021 biennium.

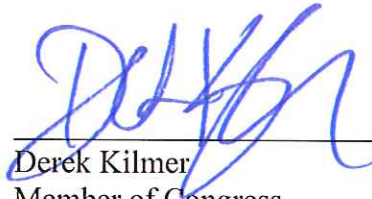
The Chehalis Basin Strategy is led by a board that includes representatives from the governor's office, the Quinault Indian Nation, and the Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation. The board has successfully funded and implemented over fifty local flood damage reduction projects, more than twenty-five farm pads, and over thirty fish barrier correction projects opening more than ninety miles of river habitat. Although the board is continuing to evaluate a range of alternatives for the long-term Chehalis Basin Strategy, we recognize that the "no action" alternative will result in further declines in aquatic species populations and new Endangered Species Act listings as well as increased flooding that will damage local communities, schools, transportation systems, and jobs.

Representatives from your agency met with members of the board recently to explore possible future federal funding avenues for the habitat work. Thank you for meeting with representatives of the Chehalis Basin process. This process has strong bipartisan support in our state and among the members of our delegation. We strongly encourage your agency to support this important project as the process moves forward.

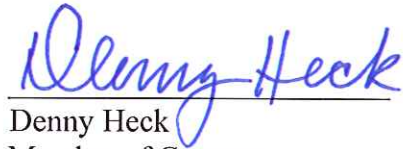
Sincerely,



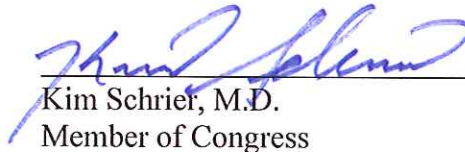
Jaime Herrera Beutler  
Member of Congress



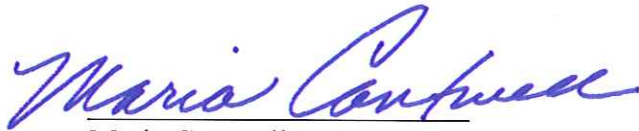
Derek Kilmer  
Member of Congress



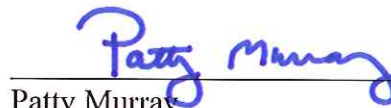
Denny Heck  
Member of Congress



Kim Schrier, M.D.  
Member of Congress



Maria Cantwell  
United States Senator



Patty Murray  
United States Senator

CC:

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Chief of Engineers LTG Todd Semonite

Natural Resources Conservation Service Chief Matthew Lohr

Federal Emergency Management Agency Administrator Pete T. Gaynor

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Acting Administrator Dr. Neil Jacobs