

**Senator Maria Cantwell**

**Carey Creek Culvert Event**

**October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2022**

[\[VIDEO\]](#) [\[AUDIO\]](#)

**Sen. Cantwell Remarks (Video Timestamp 8:02 – 11:54)**

**CANTWELL:** Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and thank you for being here. I want to officially thank the Secretary of Transportation for coming all the way to Washington to be here. I want to thank him for his part in helping to negotiate a settlement so that we didn't have a supply chain disruption as it related to the railroad and transportation sector.

I want to thank him for funding and helping us with the West Seattle Bridge and I want to thank him for today. The funding for what is called the Apple Loop, infrastructure that is needed in Wenatchee, which is one of the largest frayed investments that our state has ever seen. That's going to help us continue to be a productive area in that side of Central Washington.

I'm so excited to be here with Senator Murray Congressman Larsen, Congresswoman Schrier, and County Executive Constantine, and the Muckleshoot Chairman because we're all here to celebrate. Today is a very big important day. It is, for the first time, the Department of Transportation federally will be filling out a Notice of Funding Opportunity for culverts, for states, counties and others to actually petition the Federal Government on projects just like Carey Creek.

So today is a very exciting day that we've struggled with for some time. We all knew that we needed to fix culverts in Washington state, and we needed to have some support. The concept of investing in transportation infrastructure has been a big priority for us, but I don't think until recent years we realized how much Puget Sound could be a powerhouse for salmon recovery, and how much culverts and their repair link to that.

The transportation infrastructure that we've planned in the past whether it was roads, or railroads, or bridges, have had devastating impacts on our streams and thus on the ability of salmon to return to their habitat. In some cases, it is the very last mile that is the problem. And in this particular area of Carey Creek, just beyond there is a very pristine area that is cooler areas. Cooler temperatures. Better natural habitat so that if we can just keep them over this culvert we're going to have some success with salmon spawning in this area.

I want to thank my staff, Nikki Teutschel, Jennifer Quan, Dave Stewart, Jami Burgess, and Tommy Bauer. All who worked on pushing forward in the infrastructure funding bill, the concept of the federal government coming back and improving on the transportation infrastructure that we funded before but didn't get quite right when it came to salmon. So today, we're correcting that.

I think that we are going to see a big return here in Puget Sound. We've already seen investments pay dividends in Skagit County and Lewis County where we've seen fish start starting again and using new habitat almost immediately after the culverts were removed.

So the new grant program and infrastructure legislation will be, I believe, one of the most successful aspects of the infrastructure bipartisan bill. It's got a lot of great things, as I just mentioned, but a

national culvert removal, and replacement restoration grant program officially opens today. So thank you all very much for being here and now I'd like to turn it over to my colleague, Senator Murray, who was very helpful in getting that infrastructure bill done, and very supportive of this infrastructure investment.

### **Sec. Buttigieg Remarks (Video Timestamp 21:06 – 27:20)**

Thank you, good afternoon.

I have to say it's a bit of a head turner for me coming from South Bend to find myself so close to North Bend.

In South Bend along the run of our river, we have one dam accompanied by one fish ladder. But as I've seen here in the Pacific Northwest, it's a little more complicated than that.

We've been having a great Washington day. From apples in Wenatchee now to salmon and fisheries in King County, and so glad to be here on the ground.

I want to thank County Executive Constantine and Evan for their work and for sharing this with us and helping us to see what's going on. I want to thank Chair Elkins and really appreciate your expression of the deep nation to nation obligations that are at stake in making sure that the United States lives up to its word when it comes to partnering with Tribal leaders.

And I particularly want to thank the federal delegation that is here. Because we literally would not be here celebrating this announcement without their work. What they have done Representatives Schrier and Larsen, Senators Murray and Cantwell, well, first of all, to make sure that culverts and salmon were contemplated in the infrastructure bill.

Secondly, to support the infrastructure bill passing at all has brought us now to this point where we're able to take direct action, that's going to be so beneficial. So you should know that you have passionate and persistent advocates for this state's and these district's needs who are in constant touch with my department to make sure that there are good outcomes.

I would add to that, by the way, we're really on a roll right now in the other Washington that maybe doesn't have quite the natural beauty that you have here in Washington state. But we're proud having been able to see the Inflation Reduction Act get signed, the most consequential climate legislation passed by any country ever. The legislation to reduce the cost of prescription drugs, and electric vehicles, and energy, and health insurance for so many here in this state. Legislation to finally do right by veterans, especially my generation of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans and more, again, all with the support of the federal delegation members you see standing up here with me today. So we are so thankful to them for all of their good work.

And in particular, what we're recognizing today, understanding how important fisheries and in particular salmon are to people here to their livelihoods, culture, and future as well as to the economy this entire region.

People in this region know well the multiple reasons for the declining salmon populations. And the culvert we're standing next to is one of those reasons, it generally allows the creek to flow under the road but it blocks so many of the salmon from being able to swim upstream to spawn.

Many culverts are old and they're deteriorated which means if something goes wrong, not only does that lead to an ecological impact, but also it can flood or wash out an important road. And like this culvert, there are hundreds that are causing similar blockages across this region.

People here also know well what that impact on salmon populations can mean for [Video cuts out]

...federal initiative to fix culverts for fishing and support tribal communities in this entire region.

States, local governments and Tribes can apply for federal funds to remove to replace or to repair culverts that aren't doing the job or that are causing these problems. We have a billion dollars across the next five years to work with in order to do that.

So those restored fish populations are going to serve Tribal citizens who have fought so hard for their rights to the salmon that have sustained them since time immemorial. It's going to serve the hotels, restaurants and tourism jobs that depend on healthy fisheries in this region. It'll benefit the whale watching industry because of the role that salmon play as a primary food source for orcas.

And even if you think fish don't matter to you, you're still better off because of this funding, because it means that the roads will be more resilient, less susceptible to being flooded, or washed out when an ageing culvert gets plugged up with debris.

So we're just delighted to be here to have this, yet another example of the practical effect of what good infrastructure investment can do. And it's a vivid illustration of the broader priorities of this administration, because so many things are going on in this infrastructure package to make the people of Washington state better off.

In fact, in this package alone, in addition to this new initiative that our departments working on, there's additional funding for fish passage from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services and from NOAA, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's agency, which will benefit Tribal and other conservation priorities.

And I'm excited to share and emphasize the new that over \$130 million is headed to Washington state in 2023 alone to modernize bridges here.

Matter of fact, we're investing over \$930 million in Washington state to improve the transportation infrastructure here that people count on so much. Roads, tunnels, railway crossings, congestion mitigation, climate resiliency, carbon reduction, and so much more in investing in specific critical projects to improve roads, bridges, pedestrian and bike infrastructure, rail, in Spokane Valley, in Seattle, and Bothell, in Lynwood and so many other places around the state and we are just getting warmed up.

So again, delighted to be able to celebrate with you. So thankful for the support that has made this timely and needed program possible.