



REGIONAL FISHERIES COALITION

August 7, 2018

David Troutt, Chair
Salmon Recovery Funding Board
PO Box 40917
1111 Washington Street
Olympia, WA 98504-0917

Dear Chairman Troutt,

The Regional Fisheries Coalition thanks you and the rest of the Salmon Recovery Funding Board for your past support of our work through the allocation of \$641,000 of capital funds for project development during the 17-19 state biennium.

As you know, RFEs were created in statute specifically to engage local communities in salmon recovery actions. We are the only state legislatively mandated on the ground non-profit program created to accelerate salmon recovery efforts. Collectively we sponsor SRFB projects that account for approximately twenty percent of the overall SRFB grant funding each year. We are boots on the ground organizations with our primary focus on getting priority salmon habitat restoration projects done.

With the project development funds you have provided us this biennium we have been able to start working on developing the next round of important habitat projects such as:

- Riparian restoration in the Yakima Basin
- Large wood supplementation in the Teanaway River
- Reestablishment of fish passage and habitat improvements in side channels in the Yakima River
- Increasing the floodplain connection to 9 acres of oxbow and floodplain habitat in the Wenatchee River basin
- Opening up fish passage to 1.6 miles of habitat in the Pilchuck River basin
- Installation of fish screens to protect 1.1 miles of channel in the Walla Walla area
- Increasing habitat complexity and restore fluvial processes at the confluence of Boulder and Goodman Creeks in Clallam County
- Connecting side channels on the Wenatchee River and Nason Creek for ESA listed Spring Chinook

These are just a few examples of the types of projects that RFEGs are developing across the state.

While we continue to work hard to implement projects and develop new ones we also are looking to the future and the next biennium to plan what we can continue to accomplish. We know that our work now has even greater importance to the general community who are concerned not just about salmon recovery but about orca recovery. We must be working together collectively to figure out how we can accelerate the work we are doing rather than slowing down.

With your support combined with support from the state legislature, WDFW, and US Fish and Wildlife Service we have been able to avoid the huge hit to our budgets that we had originally projected if no new revenues were identified to fill the hole left by declining base funding due to market and environmental conditions. We are faced with the same situation again starting in July 2019 if funding we received this biennium is not continued into the next biennium. While WDFW is still committed to supporting us in their budget request to the state this year it is challenging for them to increase their budget request as they are dealing with a \$30 million budget hole overall.

Consequently we request that you consider in your budget decisions in your Thursday meeting including \$641,000 again in the 19-21 capital budget to support continued project development work by RFEGs. We have heard from staff at RCO that they are in conversations with WDFW about whether WDFW can increase its budget request to cover this additional amount however those conversations will not have concluded before your meeting this Thursday. We would suggest that if you would like to support our ability to continue to develop good projects that it would be prudent to at least put in a place holder in your budget request in case WDFW decides that they are unable to increase their request.

As you know salmon habitat projects can take multiple years to build the partnerships and agreements that can lead to requests for implementation funds. Having consistency in our capacity to develop those projects will enable us to maintain and even accelerate our progress in getting new projects ready to go.

Thank you for your consideration. Please let us know if you have any questions or would like additional information before your meeting on Thursday.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dick Wallace". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Dick Wallace, Regional Fisheries Coalition Chair