



South Sound Chapter
Puget Sound Anglers

March 8, 2021

Senator David Frockt
Senator Christine Rolfes
Representative Steve Tharinger,

Dear Capital Budget Writers,

We are writing to request your support for \$2.2 million in 2021-2023 Capital Budget funding for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) to advance the Deschutes River Watershed Center project, which would construct a new, state-of-the-art salmon hatchery and education center on the Deschutes River in Tumwater. This facility will allow WDFW to increase hatchery salmon production to provide additional prey for Southern Resident Killer Whales (SRKW), enhance fishing opportunities for tribal and non-tribal fisheries throughout Puget Sound, and help educate the public about salmon and SRKW conservation efforts.

Our organizations represent tens of thousands of recreational anglers and hundreds of businesses that make up Washington's \$2.4 billion recreational fishing economy. Stretching from Vancouver to Bellingham and from Clarkston to Colville, recreational fishing and boating is an important part of the economic and social fabric of Washington's rural and urban areas. Recreational anglers are also committed conservationists, supporting habitat restoration efforts and the widespread adoption of mark-selective fishing practices to target hatchery-reared salmon and help conserve wild salmon and steelhead populations.

Governor Inslee's Southern Resident Orca Task Force has recommended increasing salmon hatchery production by 50 million smolts to benefit SRKWs in a manner consistent with state and federal laws. In 2020, the Legislature provided WDFW funding to produce a hatchery improvement master plan to achieve these production increases. The [plan](#) was published on January 1, 2021 and estimates that approximately 4 million additional smolts could be produced at a new Deschutes River hatchery – a significant contribution towards the 50 million smolt goal.

Since the Deschutes River lacked a historical population of wild salmon due to the natural Tumwater Falls, the Deschutes River provides an ideal location to increase hatchery production within federal Endangered Species Act protections for wild Chinook. The increased production will also benefit fisheries throughout the Puget Sound as these fish return to the South Sound.

The legislature has already provided \$8.2 million to advance this important project, including \$2.5 million that should be reappropriated for use in the 2021-2023 biennium to complement \$2.2 million in new Capital Budget funding. We also respectfully ask that you set a deadline for completing this next phase of the project and ensure construction can be completed in the 2023-2025 biennium. Thank you for your continued leadership.

Nello Picinich, Executive Director
CCA Washington

George Harris, President & CEO
Northwest Marine Trade Association

Liz Hamilton, Executive Director
Northwest Sportfishing Industry Association

Allen Morrow, President
South Sound Puget Sound Anglers

Cc: Sens. Hunt, Van De Wege, Salomon; Reps. Dolan, Bateman, Chapman, Fitzgibbon