

Governor Jay Inslee
Office of the Governor
PO Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

March 22, 2022

**Letter of Support for Washington State Academy of Sciences Scientific Review
in the 2022 Supplemental Operating Budget**

Governor Inslee,

We are writing today as a group of conservation organizations with a shared commitment to science-based natural resource management and an unwavering dedication to the protection and recovery of the northwest's native fish and wildlife species.

Given these shared values, we strongly support the Washington State Academy of Sciences third-party review proposed in Section 604(39) of Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 5693 to evaluate how commercial salmon fishing gears authorized for use in the nontribal lower Columbia River fisheries impact survival of wild salmon and steelhead.

While unintentional, commercial fishing gear impacts that harm and kill wild salmon and steelhead in lower Columbia River fisheries have long been identified as a primary contributing factor impeding recovery efforts throughout the Columbia River basin. These fishery impacts to federally protected salmon and steelhead undermine the significant investments made each year by the public, Tribal Nations, and our government to recover these threatened and endangered species, while also resulting in fisheries being curtailed—a lose-lose situation for salmon and orca recovery and local fishing communities.

Regardless of the species of concern, having adequate data and utilizing best available science must be foundational to achieve effective and responsible wildlife management. The proposed Washington State Academy of Sciences review is critically-needed to identify longstanding fishery management data gaps for all commercial salmon fishing gears considered for use in nontribal Columbia River fisheries and will inform a management strategy to develop and advance fishing methods that are scientifically proven to be the least harmful to wild salmon and steelhead recovery.

Since 2005, the Washington State Academy of Sciences has been a vital resource providing independent, transparent, and unbiased assessments to guide informed policy on complex and technical wildlife issues. Third-party science reviews are essential to providing credibility and confidence to the public, avoiding institutional silo effects, and ensuring best available science is informing policy-making. Further, opposition by public agencies or officials to third-party scientific peer-review should be cause for public concern and reinforce the need and benefit of that external review.

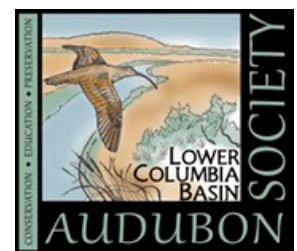
This proposed science review will work in concert with your previous commitments to using best available science to “develop a Columbia River fishery that creates the least harm to wild salmon and is the most beneficial to salmon recovery efforts” and “to propose a path forward to improve our understanding and implementation of viable alternative gear types” to reduce, if not eliminate, harm to wild salmon and steelhead in lower Columbia River fisheries.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge you to support Section 604(39) of Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 5693 in the 2022 Supplemental Operating Budget that will be foundational to guiding the development of resilient fisheries that will aid the recovery of wild salmon, steelhead, and orcas, and bring economic stability to Columbia River communities.

Sincerely,

Wild Fish Conservancy
Washington Wildlife First
Center for Biological Diversity
Orca Conservancy
Salish Center for Sustainable Fishing Methods
Legal Rights for the Salish Sea
Northwest Environmental Advocates
Lower Columbia River Audubon Society
Northwest Watershed Institute
Grays Harbor Audubon
Western Wildlife Outreach
Wild Orca
Endangered Species Coalition
Animal & Earth Advocates, PLLC
Whale and Dolphin Conservation
Friends of the San Juans
Humane Voters of Washington
Raincoast Conservation Foundation

Native Fish Society
Whale Scout
Northwest Animal Rights Network
Coalition to Protect Puget Sound
The Salish Sea School
The Conservancy Angler
Kettle Range Conservation Group
Living Oceans
On Scared Ground
Greenbelt Consulting
Whidbey Environmental Action
Sustainable Bainbridge
Vashon-Maury Island Audubon Society
Bainbridge Beach Naturalists
Fautleroy Watershed Council
Farmer Frog
World Salmon Forum
Friends of Black Diamond





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