

**Emerald Water Anglers ♦ NW Energy Coalition ♦ People For Puget Sound
Save Our Wild Salmon ♦ Steelhead Diner ♦ Washington Trollers Association
Working Snake River for Washington**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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120 Western Washington business and community leaders seek leadership of Senators Murray and Cantwell in resolving Columbia Basin salmon crisis

Open letter echoes Eastern Washington leaders' earlier request that senators bring stakeholders together to craft a comprehensive solution for salmon and the state and regional economy

Seattle, Wash. – On Tuesday, 120 Western Washington business owners and community leaders wrote to U.S. Senators Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell urging their leadership in solving the Northwest salmon crisis. The open letter to the senators also appears as a full-page ad in today's Puget Sound-based weekly *the Stranger*.

These leaders want the senators to bring together all interests —farmers, fishermen, energy users, business owners and local communities—to craft a durable science-based and economically viable salmon restoration plan. They acknowledge past tensions surrounding the salmon issue, but note the enormous economic opportunity if Washington can forge an effective long-term solution.

“Salmon aren't just a part of our state's natural heritage, they are also very important to our economy,” said Jeremy Brown, commercial salmon troller and Washington Trollers Association board member. “Especially in our coastal and river communities, salmon has traditionally been a huge source of good jobs and income. The population declines of Columbia Basin salmon in the past several decades have taken a heavy toll on the health of our communities. It's time to sit down together to figure out how we can constructively address these issues for people on both sides of the mountains.”

Kevin Davis, who owns and operates the Steelhead Diner and Blueacre Seafood in Seattle with his wife Teresa, stressed that his business success depends on fresh, high-quality foods. “I am working constantly with both farmers and fishermen, and I see absolutely no reason why Washington state can't chart a path forward that supports both healthy farms and healthy fisheries,” Davis said. “We need both. I know that we can find common solutions to our common problems, and bringing people together to finally start that discussion is the right next step.”

Regional orca experts and federal scientists recognize how critical Columbia basin chinook are to the diet of Puget Sound resident killer whales. The Columbia and Snake rivers were once the West Coast's greatest source of chinook salmon.

“One of the biggest threats facing our resident orcas today is the availability of food,” said People For Puget Sound executive director Kathy Fletcher. “Our killer whales depend largely on chinook salmon - whose numbers have dropped significantly in the Northwest. This relationship between orcas and salmon is one more connection -- like those of food and energy -- uniting the people of Eastern and Western Washington. And its one more reason why we need leadership from our senators to bring our communities together to find effective lasting solutions. No salmon -- no orcas. It’s that simple.”

More than 50 Eastern Washington business and community leaders began the discussion with Senators Murray and Cantwell in late April in an open letter urging their support of a new inclusive approach to Columbia Basin salmon recovery. U.S. Senators Mike Crapo (R-Idaho) and Jeff Merkley (D-Oregon) previously expressed support for resolving the salmon recovery stalemate through a regional stakeholder negotiation that considers all credible options, including the removal of the four lower Snake River dams.

“I am certainly encouraged by the effort and support of so many business and community leaders on the other side of the mountains and for their interest in sitting down together to work through the issues in a way that can benefit everyone,” said Spokane resident Don Barbieri, chair for Red Lions Hotels and a signer of the eastside letter. “The uncertainty caused by the failure to resolve the salmon crisis affects all of us.”

The Western Washington letter signers — a cross section of business and community leaders — seek a cooperative approach to salmon recovery and to the issue of the lower Snake River dams. An inclusive stakeholder process could not only protect and restore endangered salmon, but also leverage solutions that improve transportation networks, produce clean and affordable energy, and create jobs in all three sectors.

“Healthy fish populations, and especially salmon and steelhead, are my bread and butter,” said Dave McCoy of Seattle’s Emerald Water Anglers, a successful Puget Sound-area guiding business. “The Columbia River and its tributaries really need to be viewed as a special resource for all the people of the region. The courts are typically good at reminding us about what we can’t do. That’s why a stakeholder process makes sense, where we can come together to work on what we can and should do. But we need the support and leadership of Washington’s senators to truly make it happen this time.”

Thirteen salmon and steelhead stocks remain listed under the Endangered Species Act despite 20 years of litigation and expenditure of more than \$9 billion on failed restoration efforts. “Our coalition of fishing businesses and conservation groups recognizes that the salmon restoration process must work for our farmers, shippers, energy users and riverside towns,” said Save Our Wild Salmon outreach director Joseph Bogaard. “We are committed to working with fellow stakeholders and our elected leaders to craft a solution that restores our salmon and benefits our communities across the state and throughout the region.”

The Western Washington leaders letter has more than 120 signers, including 50 businesses, 40 community leaders, 20 organizations, and several prominent local scientists. For more information and to view the letters with an up-to-date signers’ list or to find copies of the open letters published in the *Pacific Northwest Inlander* and *the Stranger*, visit: <http://www.workingsnakeriver.org/letter>

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