



Dungeness River Management Team
Cooperative Management of Our Watershed's Resources
Coordinated by Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe and Clallam County
1033 Old Blyn Highway • Sequim, WA 98382 • (360) 683-1109

January 16, 2019

Honorable Representative Steve Tharinger
JLOB 314
PO Box 40600
Olympia, WA
98504-0600

RE: Support for Including Dungeness River Floodplain Restoration Project in PSAR Large-Cap Budget

Dear Representative Tharinger,

The Dungeness River Management Team (DRMT), one of the longest standing watershed council's in the state, requests that the *Dungeness River Floodplain Restoration Project* (Project) be included in the Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration (PSAR) large-cap budget for 2019-2021. This large-scale, multi-partner, high priority project ranked #2 on the PSAR list of Regionally Significant Projects, and the DRMT continues to recognize floodplain restoration as the #1 "strategic element" necessary to recover ESA-listed salmon and habitat in the Dungeness. Adjusting the current large-cap budget from \$42.5 million to \$45,064,884 would allow both the #1 and the #2 Regionally Significant projects in Puget Sound to progress, which is crucially important at this time for the Dungeness, as this project of multiple benefits enters its construction phase.

The Project sets back and realigns both a substantial levee and a popular roadway, which currently bisects the lower floodplain and disconnects a large portion of it from the river. Setting the levee back and relocating the road will allow the river to spread out over its floodplain, **improve salmon habitat, reduce flood hazards, and improve public safety**, all significant benefits to local residents. **Community resilience** will additionally be enhanced with **local job opportunities, public access, and recreational opportunities**.

Salmon are culturally significant and play a vitally important economic and environmental role on the North Olympic Peninsula. Four **ESA-listed (threatened) salmon** species use the project site: Puget Sound Chinook, Puget Sound Steelhead, Eastern Strait of Juan de Fuca Summer Chum, and Bull Trout. Puget Sound Chinook salmon recovery and delisting cannot occur without recovery of the unique Dungeness River population (*Puget Sound Chinook Salmon Recovery Plan*, NMFS 2007). The Project restores Critical Habitat for salmon, providing immediate and future benefits. Restoring the floodplain within this reach is essential to increase the quantity of spawning, rearing and transitional habitat in the Dungeness River (NMFS 2007), and has been identified as a crucial component of successful salmon recovery by multiple technical studies (*Summer Chum Salmon Initiative*, 2000; *Physical Processes, Human Impacts and Restoration Issues of the Lower Dungeness River*, 2002; *Recommended Restoration Projects for the Dungeness River*, 1997; *WRIA 18 Limiting Factors Analysis*, 1999).

Because the Dungeness River Floodplain Restoration Project improves habitat for Puget Sound Chinook, the primary prey for Southern Resident Killer Whales, the project also benefits **ESA-listed (endangered) Southern Resident Killer Whales (SRKW)**. NMFS' five-year action plan for SRKW identified 'Management

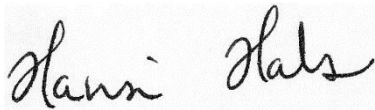
Measure 1.1: Rebuild depleted populations of salmon and other prey to ensure an adequate food base for recovery' (NMFS, 2016).

Since 1988 the DRMT, a community partnership of individuals and stakeholders, has worked together to develop and pursue implementation of locally based, long-term solutions to Dungeness Watershed management issues. DRMT has been supportive of the Dungeness River Floodplain Restoration Project since at least 1997, and the Project achieves several goals which align with the DRMT's stated purposes and goals (<http://dungenesswc.s3-website-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/team.htm#operations>), such as: **restoring habitat function, reducing flood risk, and improving public safety.**

Other project collaborators have included Clallam County, Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe, federal and state agencies, nonprofits groups, and local landowners. The Puget Sound Partnership recognized the Dungeness as a Priority Floodplain, and floodplain reconnection and levee realignment are necessary steps to restore the lower Dungeness River. The Project is also ranked as a high priority in the *Puget Sound Action Agenda*, and the North Olympic Lead Entity for Salmon's *2018 Four-Year Work Plan* rates it as priority #1 out of 45 ranked projects. Watershed planning for the Dungeness River prepared by the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe emphasizes that priority projects include the restoration of the river mouth, estuary, and lower river floodplain (JSKT 2007).

Through participation in many studies, presentations and field trips, DRMT has gained a deep understanding and appreciation for this project, which will ultimately **reduce flood risks, reconnect the river to its historic floodplain, restore riverine processes and functions and improve salmon habitat.** Please include Dungeness River Floodplain Restoration in the 2019-2021 PSAR budget.

Sincerely,



Hansi Hals, Chair, DRMT

2019 DRMT Membership

<i>Clallam Conservation District</i>	<i>North Olympic Land Trust</i>
<i>Clallam County</i>	<i>Protect the Peninsula's Future</i>
<i>Clallam PUD #1</i>	<i>Estuary/River Property Owners</i>
<i>City of Sequim</i>	<i>Sports Fisheries</i>
<i>Dungeness Beach Association</i>	<i>US Forest Service</i>
<i>Dungeness National Wildlife Refuge</i>	<i>WA Department of Ecology</i>
<i>Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society</i>	<i>Water Users Association</i>
<i>Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe</i>	<i>WDFW</i>