

WATER RESOURCE INVENTORY AREA (WRIA 8) SALMON RECOVERY COUNCIL



Beaux Arts Village
Bellevue
Bothell
Clyde Hill
Edmonds
Hunts Point
Issaquah
Kenmore
Kent
King County
Kirkland
Lake Forest Park
Maple Valley
Medina
Mercer Island
Mill Creek
Mountlake Terrace
Mukilteo
Newcastle
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Snohomish County
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Woodway
Yarrow Point

Cedar River Council
Friends of the Cedar River Watershed
Friends of the Issaquah Salmon Hatchery
Greater Seattle Chamber of Commerce
Long Live the Kings
Mid-Sound Fisheries Enhancement Group
Mountains to Sound Greenway
Northwest Marine Trade Association
Sno-King Watershed Council
Trout Unlimited
Water Tenders

Alderwood Water and Wastewater District
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
US Army Corps of Engineers
Washington Departments:
Ecology
Fish and Wildlife
Natural Resources
Washington Association of Sewer and Water Districts
King Conservation District

November 1, 2017

Jeff McKee
Chief, Navigation Branch
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
441 G Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20314

Major General Scott A. Spellmon
Commander, Northwest Division
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
P.O. Box 2870
Portland, OR 97208-2870

Dear Mr. McKee and General Spellmon:

On behalf of the Lake Washington/Cedar/Sammamish Watershed (WRIA 8) Salmon Recovery Council (Council), we request the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) Headquarters and Northwest Division's attention to address urgent facility repairs at the Hiram M. Chittenden Locks, also known as the Ballard Locks, in Seattle, Washington. The Council is comprised of 28 local governments and stakeholder representatives from businesses, community groups, concerned citizens, and state and federal agencies. This group has been working collaboratively since 2000 to recover Chinook salmon, listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act.

The Locks are over 100 years old and the degraded condition of the facility and associated potential failure compel us, as elected officials from 28 local governments in central Puget Sound, to **request your assistance in funding a comprehensive regional economic impact study of the benefits of the Locks and impacts from a potential failure, and in the meantime to allocate and reserve up to \$60 million above annual operations and maintenance budget requests, to support critical repairs, beginning in 2018, to maintain the current functions of the Ballard Locks.**

The Locks are the busiest in the nation in terms of vessel traffic served, and are essential to our region's economy, transportation, and salmon recovery efforts. However, much of the Locks' equipment and infrastructure are long past design lifespans and urgently need repair or replacement. In 2012, the Corps lowered the dam safety rating of the Locks to two out of five because they could fail in an earthquake. Subsequently, some critical facilities, including the large lock emergency closure system and pump plant, have already failed and required emergency funding to keep the facility operational. The poor condition of the Locks has reduced the effectiveness of fish passage facilities and resulted in increased mortality of juvenile and adult salmon.



The Corps has developed a prioritized list of repair projects that outlines the activities needed to ensure the safety and viability of the Locks for the next 75 to 100 years. **The cost of implementing the Corps' identified and prioritized Locks repair projects would require up to \$60 million in investments above the President's 2018 budget.** A consortium of interested industry and community groups commissioned and recently released a study, *Economic Impacts of the Hiram M. Chittenden Locks*, to document the economic value of the Locks and impacts associated with a potential failure. The cost of restoring this critical infrastructure is far outweighed by the economic benefit the Locks bring to this region as outlined by the study, including:

- At least \$90 - \$120 billion over the next 75-100 years (\$1.2 billion annually) in maritime activity, including commercial fishing companies, shipyards, vessel sales, freight and shipping services, and marinas;
- \$9 - \$12 billion in payroll over the next 75-100 years (\$120 million annually); and,
- 3,000 jobs; and,
- \$1.1 - \$1.5 billion over the next 75-100 years in federal tax revenues (\$15 million annually).

While these are impressive economic benefits, the scope of the economic impact study is limited primarily to the maritime industry, and the full suite of economic and infrastructure benefits supported by the Locks is orders of magnitude greater. The WRIA 8 Salmon Recovery Council will coordinate with businesses and community leaders to secure funding and conduct a regional analysis of the economic impacts of a failure at the Locks that could severely damage critical infrastructure and pose a risk to public health. We request Corps participation and support in funding this analysis.

In July, the Ballard Locks celebrated its centennial, with the Corps hosting festivities to commemorate the occasion and highlight the importance of the Locks to the local community, region, and nation. The Locks play an essential role in regional commerce, public safety, and salmon recovery. Failure of the Ballard Locks would be a crippling blow to the regional economy by rendering the Interstate 90 floating bridge unusable, affecting more than a quarter million commuter and freight trips per day, and severing water supply lines to Mercer Island, a community of over 30,000. In addition, innumerable vessels, docks, and pipes on and in Lakes Washington and Union would be significantly affected, furthering public health and safety risks. Commercial and recreational boating would come to a standstill, and the third most visited tourist destination in the Seattle region would sit quiet.

Recovering threatened salmon populations in our watershed is vital to the cultural and economic fabric of our communities. Since 2005, the Council has directed the investment of over \$125 million in salmon habitat restoration and protection. Without effective facilities to enable salmon to pass through the Locks, this investment is at risk. The Locks are the single biggest factor limiting salmon populations in our watershed and are negatively affecting Tribal Treaty Rights and other fishing opportunities.

These anticipated impacts from a Locks failure are why we request your assistance in funding a comprehensive regional impact analysis, as well as allocating and reserving \$60 million in additional funding to expedite critical repairs beginning in 2018 to maintain the current functions

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of the Ballard Locks. As a regional impact analysis is finalized, we will come back to you with a comprehensive request to replace the aging Locks with a modern, seismic-proof structure that will not only protect the environment and ESA-listed species, but will protect the citizens of the region from a seismic disaster that could cripple the economy for many years to come.

If you have any questions about WRIA 8 salmon recovery priorities or critical repair needs at the Ballard Locks, please feel free to contact Jason Mulvihill-Kuntz, WRIA 8 Salmon Recovery Manager at 206-477-4780 or jason.mulvihill-kuntz@kingcounty.gov. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Andy Rheaume
Chair, WRIA 8 Salmon Recovery Council
Mayor, City of Bothell



John Stokes
Vice-Chair, WRIA 8 Salmon Recovery Council
Mayor, City of Bellevue

CC: Senator Maria Cantwell
Senator Patty Murray
Representative Jaime Herrera Beutler
Representative Suzan DelBene
Representative Dennis Heck
Representative Pramila Jayapal
Representative Derek Kilmer
Representative Rick Larsen
Representative Cathy McMorris Rodgers
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Colonel Mark Gerald, Commander, Seattle District, Army Corps of Engineers
Amy Reese, Chief of Operations, Seattle District, Army Corps of Engineers
Nathan McGowan, Lake Washington Ship Canal Operations Manager, Seattle District,
Army Corps of Engineers
Charles Costanzo, Vice President – Pacific Region, American Waterways Operators
Ryan McFarland, Federal Government Relations Manager, Port of Seattle
WRIA 8 Salmon Recovery Council members