

# Preserving Puget Sound monitoring and fisheries

A 2020 supplemental funding request



## Emergent need

\$2.5 million for monitoring Puget Sound salmon and steelhead fisheries in the 2019-21 biennium



The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and Treaty Tribes in Western Washington co-manage salmon fisheries in Puget Sound. Every year, the co-managers develop harvest agreements that meet federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) conservation requirements that are approved by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

### The problem

Due to WDFW's budget shortfall, the agency has insufficient funding to fully staff monitoring of Puget Sound salmon fisheries and collect key information on salmon and steelhead returning to hatcheries and spawning grounds. Without sufficient funding, the Department will be out of compliance with monitoring requirements outlined in ESA permits, which could have significant impacts on recovery goals for these species as well as limit salmon and steelhead fisheries in Puget Sound.

### The solution

This funding will allow WDFW to:

- Provide the appropriate level of staffing to track hatchery and wild salmon and steelhead returns;
- Maintain compliance with federal ESA permit requirements and ensure conservation objectives are met; and
- Maximize fishing opportunities.

### Contact

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### **Puget Sound Sampling**

Each year, state, federal, and tribal fishery managers gather to plan the Northwest's recreational and commercial salmon fisheries. During the 2019 season-setting process, co-managers identified a need for increased research, monitoring and evaluation efforts in order to protect fisheries and provide timelier in-season reporting in Puget Sound.

Specifically, conducting a predator study in the Lake Washington Ship Canal and increasing capacity in WDFW's Catch Record Card Unit is expected to produce more timely catch estimates (resulting in data being available after 6 months instead of the current 18 months). This additional monitoring work will maximize harvest while meeting ESA permit requirements and conservation objectives.

### **Skagit Steelhead Catch and Release Fishery**

Before closing in 2010 to protect wild steelhead, the Skagit River steelhead fishery was one of the most popular angling opportunities in Washington. The closure was a big blow to northern Puget Sound, including in towns that once saw thousands of anglers visit annually.

State and tribal co-managers worked with NOAA Fisheries to secure a federal ESA permit in 2018 that authorizes limited fisheries for steelhead in the Skagit River, and anglers are once again returning to the area. Last year, the fishery provided an estimated 6,600 days of recreational opportunity and generated more than \$1 million of economic impacts to the region.

The ESA permit requires intensive monitoring of the fishery. WDFW used one-time funds in the 2017-19 biennium to provide this opportunity and meet extensive permit requirements. This budget request will fund continued monitoring and help maintain this opportunity.



### **Centralia Diversion Trap**

In 2016, the Nisqually River was designated as a wild steelhead gene bank, where fishery managers work to preserve key populations of wild fish. To accomplish this, WDFW must closely track steelhead returns and remove hatchery fish at the Centralia Diversion Dam.

The Nisqually Indian Tribe has agreed to fund the design and construction of a trapping facility with the expectation that WDFW will staff the trap year-round. This request funds two employees to operate the trap. New staff will also lead monitoring and research as part of the broader effort to recover salmon in Puget Sound.

If not funded, the agency will be unable to meet the conservation objectives for wild steelhead gene banks and will be out of compliance with ESA permits and Puget Sound Chinook harvest management plan targets.