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February 3, 2023

Gloria M. Shepherd, Executive Director
Federal Highway Administration
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave., SE., Mailstop E62-204
Washington, DC 20590-0001
RE: NWSA Federal Highway Administration Culvert AOP Grant Application

Dear Director Shepherd,

I am pleased to write in support of the Northwest Seaport Alliance (NWSA)'s Creek Fish Passage Restoration grant application submitted to the Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration's FY2022 Culvert Aquatic Organism Passage Program.

The NWSA seeks federal funding to design and permit a solution to the Wapato Creek Culvert (WCC), which currently presents a significant barrier to aquatic connectivity between Puget Sound and Wapato Creek. In addition to concerns for aquatic organism passage, local flood risk and declining structural integrity at the culvert threaten to disrupt international marine terminal operations.

The WCC conveys creek and tidal waters beneath Pierce County Terminal to an outlet on the Blair Waterway. Fish passage through the WCC is only possible during high tides, which restricts anadromous salmonids' access to upstream habitat. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife classifies the WCC as a fish barrier with an "unknown" percent passable. There is also a 'dogleg" in the culvert significantly restricting light in the system which further impedes fish migration. Improving aquatic connectivity at WCC will allow fish access to upstream habitat including the new habitat site at Lower Wapato Creek completed by the Port of Tacoma in collaboration with the Puyallup Tribe of Indians, city governments, and other permitting agencies.

Addressing the WCC and outfall at the Pierce County Terminal will improve fish passage and establish hydrologic connectivity within the Wapato Creek estuary, reducing flood risks for surrounding communities while maintaining critical international marine terminal operations and safety. That is why I am pleased to write in support of NWSA's Wapato Creek Culvert project and urge your full and fair consideration. Should you have any questions, please contact Emma Abraham in my Tacoma district office at Emma.Abraham@mail.house.gov or 253-272-3515.

Sincerely,



Derek Kilmer
Member of Congress