

Snoqualmie Fish Farm Flood Implementation Oversight Committee

July 28, 2020

The Honorable Dow Constantine
King County Executive
401 Fifth Avenue, Suite 800
Seattle, WA 98104

RE: Support for Reconvening Snoqualmie Fish Farm Flood Buffer Task Force

Dear Executive Constantine:

In April of 2018, the Snoqualmie Fish, Farm, Flood (FFF) Implementation Oversight Committee (IOC) convened the Buffer Task Force (BTF) with the specific goal of generating recommendations for variable width, voluntary riparian buffers on private land in the Snoqualmie Valley Agricultural Production District (SVAPD). The intent was to move away from a one-size-fits-all approach and identify riparian buffer widths that provide scientifically supported, waterway specific, ecological lift for salmon while minimizing, as best as possible, the impact to agriculture.

Eleven individuals served on the Buffer Task Force, including representatives from the City of Duvall, the King County Agriculture Commission, private farm landowners (2), Snoqualmie Indian Tribe, Citizens Alliance for Property Rights, Snoqualmie Valley Preservation Alliance, Snoqualmie Watershed Forum, Stewardship Partners, and Tulalip Tribes. The BTF spent 18 months developing recommendations for variable width buffers specific to the SVAPD; supporting documentation for this work is attached to this letter. The primary recommendations specify the *maximum* riparian buffer width, based on waterway size and other factors, that would be pursued with King County dollars on privately owned agricultural lands in the SVAPD.

Ten of the eleven members of the BTF support the variable width recommendations, with one landowner member citing an overarching concern about the impacts of trees on agriculture. The tribal partners at the table also addressed the need for a future discussion about the need for *minimum* buffers in order to ensure that plantings funded by public dollars are providing a legitimate ecological benefit. For now, they are supportive of the recommendations, with the understanding that minimum widths must be discussed when developing an implementation framework for them to remain supportive. The purpose of these recommendations is not to be used to change regulatory language or intent. These buffer widths were agreed upon in order to help strategically plant voluntary riparian buffers of various widths in a working landscape. It is the desire of the BTF that King County use these recommendations to advance and balance the needs for salmon recovery and productive agriculture in the SVAPD.

The agreement around variable widths was the first essential step to gain agreement on how to accelerate riparian buffer plantings in the SVAPD. We are requesting the Executive to support, through staff time and necessary budget, reconvening the Buffer Task Force to develop an implementation plan that includes goals, metrics, and incentive programs. Moving into the

implementation body of work will allow King County to continue to be at the forefront of innovative solutions for healthy habitats while supporting the local food economy.

The IOC looks to support the Buffer Task Force work by making the following requests:

- 1) **Reconvene membership of the initial Buffer Task Force (to the greatest extent possible)**, including experts in policy and buffer project expertise, to continue discussions around implementation of riparian buffers.
 - a. Encourage the Buffer Task Force to set *minimum* buffers in order to ensure that plantings funded by public dollars are providing a legitimate ecological benefit.
 - b. Encourage the Buffer Task Force to set forward specific riparian planting goals and metrics for success so progress towards a healthy riparian ecosystem can be tracked.
 - c. Expand incentive programs to encourage private landowners to participate in riparian buffer plantings. This should include exploring the development of additional funding and incentive enhancements to current buffer implementation programs, such as enhanced rental payments, a Carbon Credit Program for riparian buffers in the SVAPD, and easements.
- 2) Encourage King County and Partners to use the Buffer Task Force decision model to apply recommended buffer widths when working with private landowners to plant voluntary riparian buffers in the SVAPD.

Getting to agreement around variable width buffers in the SVAPD was an exciting, monumental effort. To build on this impressive work, it is imperative that the Buffer Task Force reconvenes to discuss implementation of riparian buffers – what the specific goals are and what additional incentives can be used to encourage private landowners to participate in plantings. **Your continued support to produce an implementation plan will lead to acceleration of riparian plantings in the SVAPD.**

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:


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Angela Donaldson

Certified Floodplain Manager, FFF Flood Caucus Chair

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Joshua Monaghan

King Conservation District, FFF Farm Caucus Chair

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Cindy Spiry

Snoqualmie Indian Tribe, FFF Fish Caucus Chair

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cc: Christie True, Director, Department of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP)
Josh Baldi, Division Director, Water and Land Resources Division (WLRD), DNRP
Megan Smith, Deputy Director, WLRD, DNRP
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