



State of Washington
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 43200, Olympia, WA 98504-3200 • (360) 902-2200 • TTY 1-800-833-6388
Main Office Location: Natural Resources Building, 1111 Washington Street SE, Olympia, WA

November 17, 2022

The Honorable Christine Rolfes
Chair, Senate Ways and Means
303 John A. Cherberg Building
Post Office Box 40466
Olympia, WA 98504-0466

The Honorable Timm Ormsby
Chair, House Appropriations
315 John L. O'Brien Building
Post Office Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

The Honorable Kevin Van De Wege
Chair, Senate Agriculture, Water,
Natural Resources, and Parks
212 John A. Cherberg Building
Post Office Box 40424
Olympia, WA 98504

The Honorable Mike Chapman
Chair, House Rural Development,
Natural Resources, and Parks
132B Legislative Building
Post Office Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504

Dear Chairpersons Rolfes, Ormsby, Van De Wege, and Chapman:

I am writing to provide you with a report titled, "Pinniped Predation on Salmonids in the Washington Portions of the Salish Sea and Outer Coast." The report was prepared by the Washington State Academy of Sciences (WSAS). This report was part of Recommendation #12 of Governor Inslee's Southern Resident Orca Whale Task Force Report (2018) and was funded in a 2021-23 operating budget proviso in ESSB 5092, Section 308(26) which reads as follows:

\$80,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2022 and \$60,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2023 are provided solely for the department to contract with the Washington state academy of sciences to provide policymakers with a report on current evidence on pinniped predation of salmon, with an emphasis on Washington's portion of the Salish sea and Washington's outer coast. The academy must provide an independent study that reviews the existing science regarding pinniped predation of salmonids, including what is known about pinniped predation of salmonids, and with what level of certainty; where the knowledge gaps are; where additional research is needed; how the science may inform decisionmakers; and assessment of the scientific and technical aspects of potential management actions. Early in this process, the academy must convene separate meetings with comanagers and scientists to share relevant research and data and provide context for the academy's work.

November 17, 2022

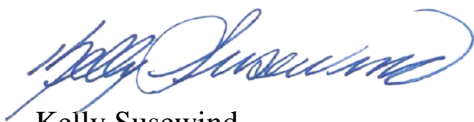
Page 2

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) convened meetings with the Western Washington treaty tribes via the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission to provide a suite of ecological and management questions to the WSAS to help frame the project (Appendix B). In addition, we participated in several meetings with the WSAS and provided pinniped population information and research and participated in management briefings to the WSAS over the course of the project.

In a section titled, "Directions for Future Research," the WSAS states that, "The preponderance of evidence supports the hypothesis that current populations of pinnipeds are likely impeding the recovery of salmon populations in Washington waters. As such, strategic lethal removal of pinnipeds is an approach that may be required for understanding the magnitude of impacts of pinnipeds on salmonids, either at local scales or at the ecosystem scale." Further, the authors go on to state, "...a management experiment of this scale and complexity would involve both substantial investment in scientific capacity and political will over long time periods." The WSAS report authors also recognize the complexity of the Marine Mammal Protection Act and the limited administrative options available to intervene and the "...constraints it creates effectively block[s] most pinniped removal..."

Pursuant to our contract with the WSAS, the WSAS may be available to the legislative committees to present the findings in their report. We would encourage you to contact WSAS directly if you would like to schedule a briefing (Donna Riordan, Executive Director, WSAS, donna.riordan@washacad.org). If you have any questions or concerns about this report or if we can assist in a briefing, please feel free to contact Tom McBride, WDFW's Legislative Director, at (360) 480-1472.

Sincerely,



Kelly Susewind
Director

cc: Donna Riordan, Washington State Academy of Sciences