



CASCADIA
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

October 27, 2009

The Honorable Christine O. Gregoire
Governor
PO Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504

Dear Governor Gregoire,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the document entitled "Ideas to Improve Management of Washington's Natural Resources" dated September 2009. These comments were developed based on input from private landowner stakeholders and others involved in implementation of the WRIA 46 Entiat Watershed Plan. We are pleased to provide comments on the new reform ideas put forward by the Natural Resources Subcabinet.

The major agency restructuring options appear to be complex and time-consuming, and expensive (Ideas 1-1 to 1-4). These options will likely result in disruptions or loss of continuity of state service in the short-term. From the experience of the Entiat Watershed Planning Unit (EWPU) any loss or disruption of state service will not only be costly financially but also result in loss of creditability of those agencies. For these reasons we recommend no agency restructuring at this time.

Perhaps the biggest concern of local landowners of the Entiat Watershed Planning Unit (EWPU) is the need to support local collaborative efforts. It's important that any possible "Ideas to Improve Management of Washington's Natural Resources" do not result in a loss of support for local efforts. The EWPU has enjoyed a tremendous long standing broad range of support from stakeholders representing state, federal, tribal, non-profit entities and local private landowners since 2000. In order for this to continue it is imperative that state agencies remain involved and supportive of this effort. Any reorganization of agency structure and other organizational improvements should support effective delivery of state service and provide assistance to these existing collaborative watershed-based efforts to recover salmon and improve ecosystem management.

Continued and expanded use of multi-agency collaborative teams for addressing key issues can improve effectiveness among the involved state agencies and also improve the state's partnership local efforts. We support those ideas in the report that will improve multi-agency collaboration at all levels.

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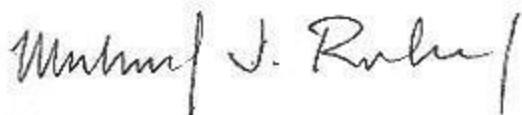
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There are real opportunities in the sharing of services and functions such as the example of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technology and data that would be of great benefit to our local group as we work to implement collaborative natural resource management. We feel it is very important the services and capacity be supportive of local needs to maximize the efficiency of these efforts.

Finally, any scenario that considers eliminating or consolidating the Washington Conservation Commission into another State Natural Resource Department should not be considered or moved forward as the Washington State Conservation Commission, from our experience is one, if not the most, efficient programs of the State Natural Resources Departments. We urge you to retain the Conservation Commission as an independent, stand-alone agency. The Commission has a proven track record of successful implementation of projects on-the-ground. The incentive based programs offered through the Commission and Conservation Districts are the best approach to the long-term care of the natural resources of the State and involvement of the landowner in positive solutions that are cost efficient and effective.

We feel that the most important reform criterion is whether any of the ideas identified actually improve the ability to restore watershed health, improve stream flows and fish/salmon habitat in our area of Washington State. Thank you for the opportunity to provide our perspective.

Respectfully,



Michael J. Rickel
Entiat Watershed Coordinator
Program Manager
Cascadia Conservation District

Cc: Josh Koemple, Chair, Cascadia Conservation District