

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 11, 2021

The Honorable Gene Dodaro
Comptroller General of the United States
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Dodaro:

We are writing to request GAO to review federal efforts to recover salmon populations in Puget Sound. Salmon populations throughout the Pacific Northwest, including Puget Sound, continue to decline, with several populations being listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act.

Numerous federal agencies are involved in the effort to restore Puget Sound salmon. Under the Endangered Species Act, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is responsible for the protection, conservation, and recovery of species. In addition, because pollution has negatively affected water quality, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) also plays a major role in salmon recovery.

These and other federal agencies have numerous programs and have spent millions of dollars in an effort to restore Puget Sound salmon, yet salmon numbers continue to decline. Of particular concern is that municipal wastewater treatment facilities in Puget Sound continue to exceed standards for water quality discharges.

We are requesting GAO examine actions taken and related funding provided by NMFS and EPA related to Puget Sound salmon recovery. In particular:

- What are the key factors identified by NMFS as contributing to the decline of or hindering the recovery of Puget Sound salmon?
- What are the key programs and other efforts, and related funding, by NMFS and EPA directed at restoring Puget Sound salmon?
- What is the frequency and magnitude of Clean Water Act violations in Puget Sound, and what actions have EPA and Washington state taken to address those violations?
- What actions have EPA and Washington state taken related to Puget Sound water quality and how have EPA and the state coordinated their actions to support salmon recovery in Puget Sound?

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. If you have any questions or need more information, please contact Liz Payne (Liz.Payne@mail.house.gov), Briana Connolly

(Briana.Connolly@mail.house.gov), and Travis Martinez (Travis.Martinez@mail.house.gov) in our offices.

Sincerely,



Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives



Dan Newhouse
Chairman
Congressional Western Caucus
U.S. House of Representatives



Cliff Bentz
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Water, Oceans, and Wildlife
House Natural Resources Committee