

## **Bill Represents Major Action by U.S. Senate to Help Puget Sound**

### **Local News**

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OLYMPIA — The Federal Government today took a major step to augment the monumental collaborative efforts already underway to restore Puget Sound by 2020. The Puget Sound Recovery Act, sponsored by Senator Maria Cantwell and co-sponsored by Senator Patty Murray, is designed to strengthen cleanup of the Puget Sound. It won the approval Wednesday of the key Senate Committee on the Environment and Public Works (EPW).

"As the second largest estuary in the nation and the core of our region's identity and prosperity, it is absolutely critical to restore and preserve this important body of water for generations to come," Senator Cantwell said. "With the passage of the Puget Sound Recovery Act, the ongoing cleanup of Puget Sound will benefit significantly from the creation of a federal grant program to support a more comprehensive effort and complement the great work of the Puget Sound Partnership. I am proud that with the committee's passage, we have taken a significant step toward restoring Puget Sound and protecting everything from animal habitats, to tourism, to our precious environment and our regional economy."

"Yesterday's passage is an important step in giving Puget Sound the protection it deserves," said Governor Gregoire. "I applaud Senator Cantwell and Senator Murray for their leadership and continued support as this bill moves forward."

"This is a big step forward," said David Dicks, executive director of the Puget Sound Partnership. "We are on the path to move from the kids' table to the big table with the Great Lakes and the Chesapeake Bay in terms of the federal government's commitment to our national treasure - Puget Sound."

The Great Lakes, Chesapeake Bay and a handful of other "great water bodies" have enjoyed formal Clean Water Act "program" status for years, ensuring consistent federal attention and funding.

Achieving this federal status was one of the goals that Governor Gregoire and the Washington State Legislature had in mind in 2007 when they created the Puget Sound Partnership and mandated the creation of an Action Agenda to restore Puget Sound by 2020. That plan was finished in December 2008 and has been widely supported.

Recognizing Washington's leadership, the Puget Sound Recovery Act takes a new approach that would provide the national attention and strong federal involvement, up to \$90 million per year, while supporting Washington State's leadership and existing stakeholder effort.

"Federal support will be tethered to the Action Agenda's priorities and therefore result in greater coordination and leverage for both State and Federal efforts. This codifies our Action Agenda's citizen-based effort. I applaud Senators Cantwell and Murray for this achievement" said David Dicks.

Bill Ruckelshaus, chairman of the Puget Sound Partnership's Leadership Council and the first head of EPA, said "We in Washington State greatly appreciate the efforts of this committee to fashion legislation that will put the federal government on a course to play a major supportive role in the restoration of Puget Sound. Congressman Dicks and Senators Murray and Cantwell have already helped get a major increase in federal funding, this bill will take the Puget Sound Partnership's efforts to the next level."

The bill now moves to the Senate floor.