

October 27, 2025

Governor Bob Ferguson
Office of the Governor
PO Box 40002
Olympia, Washington 98504-0002

We, the undersigned mayors, chief executives, and utility leaders from across the Puget Sound region are writing to share our commitment to Puget Sound health and to convey our serious concerns about the state's current path toward nutrient regulation for municipal wastewater treatment plants as proposed by the Department of Ecology.

This regulatory approach will require wastewater plant upgrades that are projected to cost over \$25 billion, before accounting for inevitable cost overruns. This will result in millions of Washingtonians seeing their utility bills double, triple or more – some by hundreds of dollars more per month. Cities and wastewater utilities have been engaged with Ecology on this topic for many years. We are committed to addressing excess nutrients and low dissolved oxygen; yet we are also aware of scientific uncertainty as to whether these investments will result in measurable positive benefits for the Sound.

In sum, the stakes are enormously high, and we must get this right.

Local governments are on the front lines of providing essential services, and our residents are struggling to absorb the cost of providing those services. We see, as you do, the rising affordability challenges that are compounding across our communities. Utility bills are now joining the increasing costs for housing, transportation, and food as major pressures on household budgets.

We ask for your leadership. We are committed to improving water quality and developing cost-effective strategies by working together. Washington can do better than a zero-sum approach. We want to find solutions that will provide tangible environmental benefits backed by solid scientific justification, and that can be achieved faster and at a manageable cost.

We are requesting that you support in your proposed budget a collaborative process led by the Ruckelshaus Center, which has a proven track record of facilitating durable, consensus-based solutions to complex environmental challenges. This process would gather all affected parties to work together towards an outcome that is protective of Puget Sound and financially sustainable for ratepayers and residents. Such an approach could be coordinated with revisions to Ecology's general permit and advanced restoration plan.

Thank you for considering this request. We look forward to working with you and your administration on this critical issue.