

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

December 15, 2017

The Honorable Ryan A. Fisher
Acting Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil
Works)
U.S. Department of the Army
108 Army Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20310-0108

The Honorable Mick Mulvaney
Director
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20503

Dear Acting Assistant Secretary Fisher and Director Mulvaney:

We write in support of the Lake Washington Ship Canal and Hiram M. Chittenden Locks project, more commonly known as the Ballard Locks, and urge you to allocate funding through the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' (Army Corps) Fiscal Year 2018 Work Plan and the President's Fiscal Year 2019 Budget Request for ongoing work to restore and modernize the ship canal and locks. The safe and efficient operation of the Ballard Locks supports \$1.2 billion in total lock-related economic activity – handling more than 1 million tons of freight, approximately 3,000 full-time jobs, and over 1.3 million visitors annually in the Puget Sound region.

The Army Corps initiated planning for the ship canal and locks to connect the fresh water of Lake Union, Lake Washington, and Salmon Bay to the salt water of Puget Sound in the late 1890s following initial authorization in the River and Harbor Act of 1890. The construction, operation, and maintenance of the Lake Washington Ship Canal with a double lock was authorized in the River and Harbor Act of 1910. Construction began in 1911 and the locks were formally opened for vessel traffic on July 4, 1917. This project consists of a 30-foot ship canal, large and small navigation lock, dam, spillway with six gates, fish ladder, visitor center, and Carl S. English, Jr. Botanical Gardens.

The Ballard Locks allow commercial and recreational vessels to travel to the docks, shipyards, warehouses, maintenance and repair facilities, and marinas in the region's fresh water lakes while reducing maintenance costs and prolonging vessel life in the fresh water environment. The importance of the locks to the maritime industry is underscored by their annual usage. Each year, the Ballard Locks support approximately 45,000 vessel transits and 14,000 lockage counts, making them the busiest lock in the United States in overall vessel traffic. For commercial vessel transits only, the Ballard Locks are the twelfth busiest in the nation.

The locks provide critical public safety and environmental functions. It maintains the water level of Lake Washington and Lake Union. Without the locks, the east-west highway traffic on the Interstate-90 and State Route-520 floating bridges, the water and sewer systems that serve Mercer Island residents, and approximately 75 miles of developed commercial, municipal, and residential shoreline would be at risk. It also supports emergency response by the Seattle Fire Department, Seattle Harbor Patrol, King County Sheriff, and U.S. Coast Guard. The facility's

spillway and fish ladder serve as a link for salmon and steelhead migrating from the ocean upstream to fresh water spawning grounds, which is important for federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) and tribal trust responsibilities.

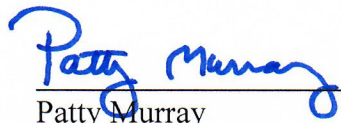
While the Army Corps has worked hard to maintain the project, the ship canal and locks are 100 years old. In 2012, the Dam Safety Action Classification rating for the project was designated as Class II (“high urgency”) and we understand an updated dam safety review is underway. In addition, several Army Corps reviews, including a Probability Failure Mode Analysis, 2012 Periodic Inspection, and 2013 Operational Condition Assessment, found that many lock and dam components are in poor or failing condition. An extended, unplanned closure of the ship canal and locks could have significant negative impacts for the more than 200 businesses that rely upon this project, endanger the lives of those living and working in the Puget Sound region, and damage critical infrastructure.

In 2010, the Seattle District began developing a prioritized list of the major maintenance projects that must be completed to restore and modernize the project. We appreciate the Administration’s past work to repair the monolith scour, replace the spillway radial gate and dewatering pump plant, and the ongoing effort to install a new emergency closure crane for the large lock. We understand the next priority project would replace the original 1916 stoney gate filling culvert valves, including lifting machinery, control systems, and other components. These valves are used to raise or lower the water elevation in the large lock and are heavily corroded and worn. The lifting machinery is obsolete and unreliable, and the valve speed cannot be adjusted to support ESA fish migration.

We respectfully request that you allocate funding through the Army Corps’ Fiscal Year 2018 Work Plan and the President’s Fiscal Year 2019 Budget Request to replace the stoney gate filling culvert valves and continue work on necessary repairs and upgrades of the Lake Washington Ship Canal and Hiram M. Chittenden Locks. This project is vital to the economy, public safety, and environmental in Puget Sound.

Thank you for your consideration of our request.

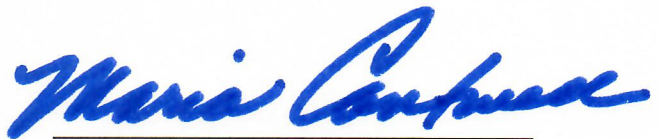
Sincerely,



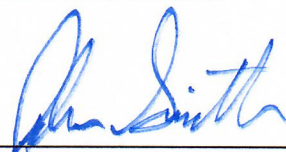
Patty Murray
United States Senator



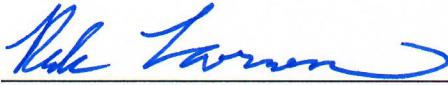
Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress



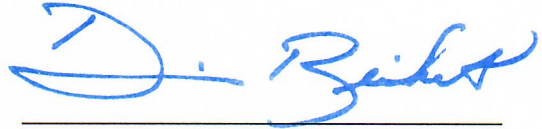
Maria Cantwell
United States Senator




Adam Smith
Member of Congress



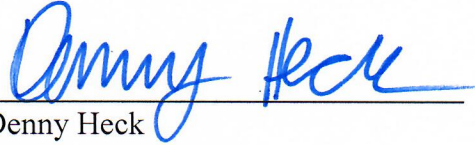
Rick Larsen
Member of Congress



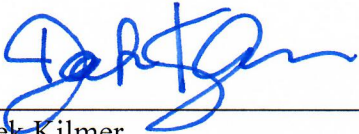
David Reichert
Member of Congress



Suzan DelBene
Member of Congress



Denny Heck
Member of Congress



Derek Kilmer
Member of Congress