

# Seattle Audubon Society

Dear Director Bellon,

The Seattle Audubon Society applauds and supports the evaluation and plan of the WA State Department of Ecology to designate Puget Sound as a No Discharge Zone (NDZ). Following through with this designation is critical for the health of our marine and terrestrial wildlife, safety of our residents, and economic prosperity in our region.

Over 70 bird species are highly dependent on Puget Sound. For many, these waters serve as an important stop during migrations from tropical, temperate, and Polar Regions while others have made the area their home all year. It is critical for the health of the avifauna reliant in our region that the flow of sewage and accompanying viruses and diseases be halted through the designation of Puget Sound as a NDZ.

Puget Sound is a major regional ecosystem vital to the economy and well-being of its human and wild inhabitants. Each year tens of millions of dollars are spent to restore its health and the establishment of a NDZ would be a major step forward in this effort. Seattle Audubon has worked diligently on the recovery of this ecosystem, including conducting systematic studies on the status and trends of seabirds which act as ecological proxies of the health of the marine ecosystem and serve as a Vital Sign for the Puget Sound Partnership.

In addition to the ecological threat that face the wildlife in and around Puget Sound, we want to additionally highlight the economic benefit of a clean and healthy Sound brings to our region. We echo the voices of many in the food industry, marine recreationalists, and birders around our region (nationally, a ~41 billion dollar industry) in support the NDZ.

Seattle Audubon is Washington State's oldest environmental group. We have advocated and fought for the birds that depend on Puget Sound for decades, including support of the Puget Sound NDZ from the original proposal. Salish Sea protection remains one of our top conservation priorities due to the many threats that this waterway faces, and the unique wildlife and people that it supports. We must ensure that vessels are not dumping waste into Puget Sound through a Sound-wide NDZ.

Please ensure the No Discharge Zone is implemented.