Schuyler Cadwalader

I am writing to express my strong support for expanding and protecting public access to Washington's shorelines, particularly along Puget Sound.

As someone who enjoys shore fishing, I've learned the hard way just how much of Puget Sound's shoreline is effectively inaccessible to the public. Large stretches of beach are privately owned, and in many places, public access is restricted even well below the ordinary high-tide line. I was genuinely surprised to discover how difficult it can be to legally walk, wade, and fish along what appears to be an open, natural shoreline.

I find this deeply frustrating. Puget Sound is one of Washington's most cherished natural resources, yet enormous portions of its shoreline are effectively reserved for the exclusive enjoyment of adjacent property owners. For the rest of us, opportunities to access the water are often limited to a relatively small number of crowded public parks and designated access points.

This is particularly detrimental to recreational fishing. Shore anglers depend on the ability to move along beaches, follow tides, and explore different stretches of shoreline. Being confined to isolated public access points severely limits those opportunities, even when miles of otherwise suitable shoreline are sitting unused.

I recognize that private property rights must be respected. However, I believe Washington needs to do much more to balance those rights with the public's interest in accessing and enjoying Puget Sound.

As part of this rulemaking, I encourage the Department of Ecology to strengthen shoreline public-access requirements, protect existing public access, and create more opportunities for public easements, shoreline connections, and walk-in access through future development and redevelopment. I would also support clearer public mapping and signage identifying where people can legally access and recreate along the shoreline.

I would particularly encourage the Department to consider the needs of recreational anglers, whose activities often require access to the shoreline itself rather than simply a viewpoint or waterfront park.

Ultimately, I believe Puget Sound should be a shared natural resource that Washington residents can meaningfully enjoy, not a patchwork of private beaches accessible primarily to those fortunate enough to own waterfront property.

I hope this rulemaking will be used as an opportunity to make meaningful progress toward greater public shoreline access for current and future generations.

Thank you for considering my comments.