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Ms. Lara Henderson, Water Quality
TMDL Program Manager
Washington Department of Ecology, Headquarters

Dear Ms. Henderson:

I am writing on behalf of the effort to urge the Department of Ecology to elevate Vancouver Lake and its tributaries to a very high priority in the current TMDL process.

I have been involved with the sport of rowing since the mid-to-late 1960s when I was on my collegiate crew team. I am a licensed United States Rowing official, and formerly was an international rowing official until my retirement at the end of my 65th year. I am also a former member and Treasurer of the United States Rowing Association, the United States Olympic Committee recognized governing body for the sport of rowing in the United States.

In 1986 a group of Vancouver/Clark County and northern Oregon outdoor sport enthusiasts formed the Portland/Vancouver Rowing Association (PVRA), a 501(c)(3) organization to promote the life-long sport of rowing, and to develop a rowing race course on Vancouver Lake. In this endeavor PVRA has worked very closely with Clark County Parks and Recreation, the City of Vancouver, numerous collegiate rowing teams, canoe/kayak and dragon boat associations and other recreational users of Vancouver Lake, to host rowing and other recreational events on the lake. We have had a very successful 33+ years of partnership. We have run events ranging from dual collegiate events including such colleges as the University of Washington and Washington State University, to regional and national championships, and international events with well over 1,000 competitors.

The regional economic impact of these activities generates many hundreds of thousands of dollars in hotel/motel/restaurant taxes, plus sales taxes from purchases from the rowers and their families and friends in the Vancouver/Clark County community.

Severity of the Pollution Problem: Since 2004 Vancouver Lake has been designated an impaired body of water in need of clean up. We have worked diligently to call this severe problem to the attention of regulatory bodies – to no avail. The severity of the problem includes impairment for temperature, PCBs, bacteria in the water, total phosphorus, Dieldrin and other toxins. Co-joined bodies of water, including Lake River, Burnt Bridge Creek, and Salmon Creek add to the Lake's level of impairment.

Risks to Public Health: Every summer our community misses out on the opportunity to bring many thousands of visitors and competitors to the largest lake within a 50-mile radius of the

greater Vancouver/Portland metropolitan area which enjoys an international reputation for hosting world, national, west coast, regional and local competitive rowing competitions because of Lake closures due to blue-green algae.

Risks to Threatened and Endangered Species: The risks posed by the deteriorated state of the Lake do not impact humans alone. Vancouver Lake is a refuge for migratory waterfowl and has identified salmonids including chum, chinook and steelhead as part of its fish population.

Vulnerability of Water Bodies to Degradation: We have been dealing with, and trying to work around, temperature, toxicity, flow and dilution issues, but these debilitating problems remain unaddressed – even as we have reached out and pleaded for assistance. Now we face a new challenge – Eurasian Milfoil Weed that is taking hold throughout the shallow waters of Vancouver Lake – including where we hold our regattas, and where swimmers and other recreational users, such as wind surfers and paddle boarders formerly enjoyed the waters of the Lake. Failure to engage with the multiplying problems impairing colder water flow from the Columbia River through the existing Flushing Channel remains disturbing and distressing to the thousands of citizens who enjoyed the Lake, and it has become an issue that needs your immediate attention.

Local Support and Interest in Watershed: For more than 30 years, the local, regional, national and international rowing communities have supported and enjoyed the multiple and unique benefits afforded by the amazing water sports venue that is Vancouver Lake. And for more than 40 years, the Vancouver, Clark County, Portland, and Multnomah County communities have understood the remarkable potential that Vancouver Lake represents for outdoor recreation, economic development and the important well-being of community residents spending time recreating with friends and families at this amazing regional resource. Vancouver Lake Regional Park is a major source for recreational shoreline opportunities that is accessible and affordable for those with limited resources, or that use public transportation to access outdoor, water-oriented recreational opportunities. Clark County has been using resources available through its Legacy Land program to acquire property around the Lake to build a series of trails as part of the Lewis & Clark Regional Trail Project. This is providing additional opportunities for access to the surrounding watershed and can be an additional major visitor attraction.

Personally, Vancouver Lake Regional Park has provided me with an opportunity to remain involved in a sport that has been very important to me, and enables me to help others become involved in and comfortable with the sport of rowing. If we do not collectively engage in saving Vancouver Lake *NOW*, we will lose this magnificent resource.

If you have any questions about what I am trying to explain, please come out to Vancouver Lake and take a ride in a Vancouver Lake Rowing Club coaching launch and observe firsthand the impact rowing is having on young people from the Vancouver/Clark County area. You will then understand what we collectively stand to lose, and why we must take action now.

Thank you,
