

Mr.

2019 TMDL Prioritization

I write as the Chair of Watersheds Alliance of Southwest Washington,- a Vancouver, Washington nonprofit devoted to education and preservation of our water resources- to strongly encourage the Department of Ecology to elevate to the highest priority possible Vancouver Lake and its tributaries in the current TDML process. Vancouver Lake has been designated as category 5 impaired water body needing improvement but no water improvement project yet exists. The Lake is impaired for temperature, PCBs, turbidity, bacteria in the water, total phosphorous, Deldrin and other toxins. Conjoined bodies of water like Lake River, Burnt Bridge Creek, and Salmon Creek all add to the Lake's level of impairment. Category 5 listings require monitoring and updating with EPA every two years and also require a mandatory plan to rectify the problems identified.

A combination of Eurasian Milfoil and blue green algae has plagued the Lake for years and resulted this past summer in a water quality crisis that led the County Health Department to repeatedly "close" the Lake for all uses.

This had significant economic and environmental impacts resulting in the loss of several rowing events and regattas that would have brought 1000's of people and 10,000's of thousands to our community.

Our fisheries are also been at risk: Salmon and sturgeon in particular. Carp are a problem because they spread milfoil and we are working with the Department of Fish and Wildlife to find a solution.

In the last year, facing this crisis, our community has come together and independently raised funds to treat the milfoil in the spring of 2020. Clark County and the Port of Vancouver have committed funds, as have several non-profit entities and numerous citizens.

Vancouver Lake Regional Park represents a major local source for recreational shoreline opportunities that remains accessible to those with limited resources or using public transportation. There is recent renewed interest in taking advantage of the lake's potential for public access and use. Clark County has been acquiring land along the shore through its Legacy Land program and started to build a series of trails looping around the lake as part of the Lewis & Clark Regional Trail project (proposed alignment attached). This is a major investment with the belief that Vancouver Lake and the surrounding watersheds can be a major attraction for public use.

For these reasons, Watersheds Alliance urges the Department of Ecology to support our community in helping improve the water quality in Vancouver Lake and its tributaries, Burnt Bridge Creek, Salmon Creek and Lake River.

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