

SPOKANE RIVER REGIONAL TOXICS TASK FORCE

FUNDING SUPPORT LETTER

Dear Member of the Washington Legislature:

This letter is sent on behalf of the Spokane River Regional Toxics Task Force (SRRTTF) in support of the \$350,000 funding proviso currently included in both the House and Senate budgets. For your reference, a copy of the House proposal is attached. We support the new language because it allows the funding to be used for the SRRTTF's top priorities and promotes the most expedient and greatest PCB reduction efforts in our watershed. Our request is for your support of the language in the House budget.

The Department of Ecology (Ecology) has chosen an innovative process of bringing all stakeholders together in a collaborative effort to address the toxic water quality concerns in the Spokane River. Ecology, EPA, the NPDES Permittee's, the Department of Health, and local conservation groups have formed the SRRTTF to develop an alternative plan to the formal Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) process. This "straight to implementation" approach is supported by both Ecology and EPA.

The purpose of the SRRTTF is to "work collaboratively to characterize the sources of toxics in the Spokane River and identify and implement appropriate actions needed to made measurable progress towards meeting applicable water quality standards for the State of Washington, State of Idaho, and The Spokane Tribe of Indians and in the interests of public and environmental health." This is a complicated and multifaceted issue with no simple solution, but the SRRTTF is dedicated to a collaborative process that will result in a reduction of toxics to the Spokane River.

The SRRTTF, facilitated by the William D. Ruckelshaus Center, represents municipal and industrial dischargers, conservation and environmental interests, and state and federal regulatory agencies. For the municipal and industrial wastewater dischargers to the river, participating in the SRRTTF is a requirement in the water quality permits issued by Ecology in 2011. The Idaho facilities that discharge to the river are expected to receive permits from EPA later this year that will include a similar requirement.

Our request is that you support the House of Representative's \$350,000 biennium budget proposal to aid in this effort. Without state support, the SRRTTF consensus process will likely end in a TMDL that will be time consuming, expensive, delay water quality improvements and negatively impact NPDES Permittee's and the Spokane community. A consensus among the stakeholders will result in large dividends in the region, addressing both existing and future environmental problems, as well as providing an innovative model for addressing difficult environmental issues.

Thank you for your support.