Lake Washington/Cedar/Sammamish (WRIA 8) Watershed
201 S. Jackson Street, Suite 600
Seattle, WA 98104-3855

July 11, 2019

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
1133 15th Street NW, Suite 100
Washington, DC 20005

RE: Support for City of Edmonds Willow Creek Daylighting/Edmonds Marsh Restoration Project

National Coastal Resilience Fund Proposal Reviewers,

I am writing in support of the City of Edmonds' application for funding through the National Coastal Resilience Fund for their Willow Creek Daylighting and Edmonds Marsh Restoration Project. The project, located in Edmonds, Washington, is a high priority nearshore salmon habitat restoration project and will leverage significant investments already made by the City and by state salmon recovery grant sources.

The Lake Washington/Cedar/Sammamish Watershed (aka "WRIA 8") is a collaborative body focused on recovering sustainable, harvestable runs of Chinook salmon. Our membership is comprised of 27 local governments, state and federal agencies, non-profit organizations, and other stakeholders with an interest in salmon recovery and watershed health. The western boundary of our watershed is the Puget Sound shoreline from Seattle to Everett, and the shoreline offers limited habitat due to the presence of a major rail line and extensive rock armoring protecting the rail infrastructure. The railroad effectively disconnects the tidal/terrestrial interface, interfering with natural processes that support native fish populations.

Edmonds Marsh is a 28-acre remnant of a historic estuary and salt marsh complex, and the current connection between the marsh and Puget Sound is a narrow ditch and system of pipes. Daylighting Willow Creek—the historic connection between the marsh and Puget Sound—will restore natural ecosystem function and tidal influence to the marsh and offer a tremendous opportunity for juvenile salmonid rearing and refuge habitat.

An emerging body of research shows the importance of non-natal nearshore habitats for the early marine life stage of Chinook salmon and other salmon species. Given the highly modified nature of the WRIA 8 shoreline, this is a significant project that is expected to offer regional salmon recovery benefits. The project directly aligns with the recovery strategies in the *WRIA 8 Chinook Salmon Conservation Plan*, and completing this project will achieve 50% of WRIA 8's 10-year nearshore salmon habitat restoration goal.

In addition to the habitat benefits provided by this project, the project is being designed to address existing urban flooding issues in the community and will mark a proactive step to guard against potentially more significant flooding in the face of climate change. The project team recently completed a sea-level rise analysis, and the results of this analysis show that the preferred alignment for the daylighted stream channel will be resilient to projected sea-level rise and storm surge scenarios modeled to the year 2100.

A key function of WRIA 8 is directing state and local grant funds to high priority salmon habitat projects. To date, WRIA 8 has awarded over $450,000 to this project to support feasibility, various technical analyses,

and the early design process. Moving forward, WRIA 8 anticipates continued support for this project through the provision of technical assistance, ensuring the project is being developed in a manner that is consistent with the WRIA 8 Plan and will result the best possible salmon recovery outcomes.

The Willow Creek Daylighting and Edmonds Marsh Restoration Project supports local and regional Chinook salmon recovery goals, and in so doing, will provide critical habitat supporting the primary prey resource for Puget Sound's endangered Southern Resident Orca population. The size and location of this project make it a notable restoration effort and worthy of your funding consideration.

If you have questions about this project or about WRIA 8 habitat restoration efforts more generally, please contact me at jason.wilkinson@kingcounty.gov, or 206-477-4786. Thank you for your consideration of the City of Edmonds' funding proposal.

Sincerely,

Jason Wilkinson
Projects and Funding Coordinator
Lake Washington/Cedar/Sammamish Watershed (WRIA 8)

THE TULALIP TRIBES

6406 Marine Dr.
Tulalip, WA 98271-9694
(360) 716-4000
FAX (360) 716-0628

April 15, 2019

To whom it may concern,
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

Re: Edmonds Marsh Restoration Project

I am pleased to provide this letter of support on behalf of the Tulalip Tribes' Natural and Cultural Resources Department regarding the Edmonds Marsh Restoration project. The Tulalip Tribes fully supports the daylighting of Willow Creek and the reconnecting of the Edmonds Marsh with the Puget Sound. The Edmonds Marsh is the largest remaining coastal marsh between Everett and Seattle and is a crucial location for ESA listed juvenile Chinook same to take refuge and rear. Reconnection and restoration of the marsh will provide valuable habitat to juvenile Chinook and other salmon species including coho, chum, and cutthroat as well as provide more valuable habitat to local and migratory birds.

Sincerely,

Kurt Nelson
Environmental Division Manager
Tulalip Tribes Natural & Cultural Resources Department

ave.the.Edmonds.Marsh@gmail.com

July 18, 2019

To: National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

The 'Save Our Marsh' community group in Edmonds, WA recommends that the grant proposal from the City of Edmonds to restore the Edmonds Marsh-Estuary be approved as it is an essential step in returning the Edmonds Marsh-Estuary into a fully functional tidal wetland with passage for spawning coho and chum salmon and rearing habitat for juvenile Chinook salmon.

The Edmonds Marsh-Estuary has been partially disconnected from Puget Sound since the 1960's when the marsh outlet was put into a 1,600-foot underground pipe with a tide gate that discharges underwater into Puget Sound. Although the tide gate is secured open in spring and summer to allow tidal exchange, the fall and winter exclusion of saltwater into the marsh-estuary for many years and manmade ditches have created a dysfunctional tidal wetland ecosystem with poor circulation. The long pipe exiting into saltwater below low tide levels has prevented coho and chum salmon from accessing upland streams to spawn and kept juvenile Chinook salmon from using the estuary.

Restoring the Edmonds Marsh-Estuary will help improve the health of Puget Sound. According to the Encyclopedia of Puget Sound, tidal wetlands have declined by 75% and there is a pressing need to preserve and restore what remains. Nearshore habitats play an integral role in our watershed ecosystems and coastal resilience. The Edmonds Marsh-Estuary is unique in its urban setting and one of the few remaining urban saltwater wetlands in Puget Sound. The proposed habitat restoration actions will provide important ecosystem services such as protection from flooding. With climate change and sea-level rise, this project will have to ensure adequate protection from flooding nearby businesses and a major east-west highway in Washington. Thus, this project clearly addresses the priorities for the National Coastal resilience Fund.

There is substantial community support for this restoration project. Many residents and visitors to Edmonds go to the Edmonds Marsh-Estuary to enjoy the natural setting and the wildlife. The north edge of the Marsh has observation platforms and a boardwalk that provide excellent viewing opportunities. Over 190 different bird species have been documented at the Edmonds Marsh-Estuary and the restoration project will enhance the estuarine habitat for shorebirds as well as aquatic species, while avoiding impacts (i.e., flooding) of adjacent areas. Both coho and chum salmon were observed in the past in the streams draining into the marsh and the Edmonds community is united in its desire to bring salmon back for future generations to enjoy.

Community support for the Marsh-Estuary is also demonstrated by a community volunteer monitoring program using high school students to collect monthly data on water quality conditions in the Marsh and its tributaries. This volunteer monitoring effort will continue during and after the restoration project so that restoration objectives can be measured. Community support is also evidenced by the commitment of City government - - the City Council established an Edmonds Marsh Restoration Fund, to which citizens can make tax-deductible donations, and set aside over one million dollars of City budget for grant matching requirements.

We urge NFWF to approve grant funding for Edmonds Marsh-Estuary restoration to improve our nearshore environment and recover and sustain salmon populations in Puget Sound.

Sincerely,

Joe Scordino (retired NOAA-NMFS Fishery Administrator)
Save Our Marsh

cc: City of Edmonds
Edmonds City Council
Port of Edmonds

SAVE OUR MARSH is a community-driven effort to preserve, enhance and restore the Edmonds Marsh-Estuary for the benefit of wildlife and salmon as well as current and future generations of people who enjoy our natural environment.

PORT OF EDMONDS

336 Admiral Way · Edmonds, WA 98020-7214 · (425) 774-0549 · FAX (425) 774-7837 · www.portofedmonds.org

July 12, 2019

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
1133 15th Street NW, Suite 100
Washington, DC 20005

Re: Edmonds Marsh Restoration

The Port of Edmonds strongly supports actions and initiatives to restore the Edmonds Marsh. It has become a consensus community goal to create plans and action strategies that will heal this critical habitat.

The plan concept includes making necessary improvements to the Marsh interior, buffer enhancements and daylighting Willow Creek to eliminate a long diversion pipe that prevents fish passage and impedes salt water exchange with Salish Sea. In order to function properly, the Marsh needs repair.

An essential element to this Marsh restoration project is to address the anticipated impacts of climate change and direct impacts from rising sea level. Once restored, the Marsh will provide a barrier to protect against surge flooding. The Port owns commercial properties immediately adjacent to the Marsh, so flood control is of paramount concern.

The Port of Edmonds fully supports the City of Edmonds grant request through NFWF National Coastal Resiliency Fund. We believe this project matches well with the goals and criteria to be designated a "Resiliency Hub" and is well qualified for this program.

Sincerely,

Robert E. McChesney
Executive Director