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March 1, 2022

Governor Jay Inslee
CC: WA Legislative Leadership

Dear Governor Inslee:

Your effort to sponsor and pass HB 1838, the bill requiring massive, inflexible buffers along even the smallest streams and ditches, highlighted for farmers the lack of consultation and engagement that has characterized your administration on agricultural issues. This is deeply concerning and has resulted in a loss of trust among most of those who provide 164,000 direct farm jobs, produce \$20 billion in farm products and represent 12% of the state's economy.

A number of your efforts that would dramatically affect us have been done without any farmer consultation. This has been seen as a sign of disregard for the future of farming in this state. Your proposals often not only would devastate agriculture, but do virtually nothing to solve the problems they supposedly address. Salmon recovery is one strong example.

We can provide a number of specific examples of this lack of consultation on issues of labor, environmental protections, fish recovery and more. In each of these cases, consultation would have resulted in better outcomes not only for farmers but also for the state and the environment. One thing you would have heard is that our farmers compete against farmers in other states and nations and costs imposed by a number of your efforts and actions are unsustainable.

A current and critical example is water management. The mayors of the small cities in Whatcom County have highlighted the misguided policies of agencies you direct. Instead of addressing the crucial need for both flood control and improved streamflow in the Nooksack river, your Department of Ecology is singularly focused on a decades long litigation over who has the right to water. You can help salmon recover now, but instead the focus is on litigation which even your own agency admits won't solve our water resource issues and will take decades to resolve.

We fully understand your desire to have your legacy as the Governor of our state identified with environmental improvements including salmon and orca recovery. We appreciate those goals and stand ready to assist. Farmers too desire that legacy, and are one of the most potent supporters of this agenda. The proper stewardship of farmland has already proven to be effective in habitat protection and restoration. Carbon reduction through changed farm practices is one important way and you need to know what our farmers are already doing to help. We are also doing much and are willing to do more to help our tribal friends and neighbors with their critical goal of salmon recovery.

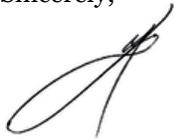
You have wrongly claimed that voluntary conservation efforts have failed, and yet, \$90 million in federal funds went unspent because of the refusal to support the Voluntary Stewardship Program and the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program to its fullest extent. Do you understand why it is offensive to farmers when you claim voluntary efforts have failed and suggest it's the farmers fault for failing to capture the vision?

Despite your statement in the press that suggests farmers don't care about salmon recovery, farmers' actions have demonstrated consistent leadership in habitat restoration and other recovery efforts.

Farmers want to know: is it your intention in the remaining time you have in office to do as much damage to the farming community as you can? If not, we ask you to meet with key farm leaders and listen to them. There are various organizations which are already providing the leadership that you suggested in your Capital Press interview is lacking. We are not lacking for smart, committed and reasonable leadership. We are lacking your ear, time and consideration.

There is still time to recover at least some of the lost trust. But, it must begin by actually engaging with the farming community. We stand ready to help you do that.

Sincerely,



Larry Stap
President, Save Family Farming



Rich Appel
President Whatcom Family Farmers



Jason Sheehan
President, Eastern Washington Family Farmers



Jason VanderKooy
President, Skagit Family Farmers