

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

September 19, 2011

Major General William T. Grisoli
Deputy Commanding General for Civil and Emergency Operations
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
441 G Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20314

Dear General Grisoli:

We are writing in regard to the development of levee vegetation management standards. As you know, this issue is of critical importance to Washington State, which is working hard to ensure the safety and functionality of levees and flood protection systems while also providing habitat for endangered species and meeting tribal treaty rights.

We have been closely following the development of the Army Corps of Engineers' (Corps) Policy Guidance Letter (PGL) regarding levee vegetation management. We remain concerned that the policies in the draft guidance would require an indiscriminate removal of trees needed for our communities to meet Endangered Species Act and tribal treaty obligations. As you know, vegetation provides habitat for endangered species and removal may actually weaken levees, and would represent a huge cost burden to levee owners. We need an approach to levee vegetation management that protects the integrity of the levees while preserving and protecting habitat, and we need a system that is cost-effective and focuses on addressing the highest safety risks.

Our constituents, in coordination with the Seattle District and Northwestern Division, have worked diligently to find a solution to the difficult issue of managing multiple, diverging federal requirements. We understand that this group has produced a model meant to apply to the PGL that levee owners can adapt to their needs and use as the basis to request a variance.

We urge you to include this model in your forthcoming updated draft PGL. While we are hopeful that the Corps is taking a more careful approach in its draft guidance, it is also important to note that continued delays only serve to create additional uncertainty for our constituents. In light of these ongoing delays we also respectfully request that you and other top Corps officials brief our offices in order to better understand the current status of the draft PGL and the direction the Corps intends to pursue.

We look forward to hearing from you on this important issue.

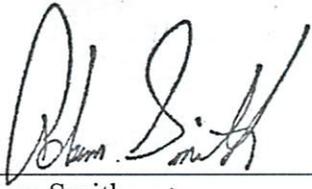
Sincerely,



Patty Murray
United States Senator



Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



Adam Smith
United States Congressman



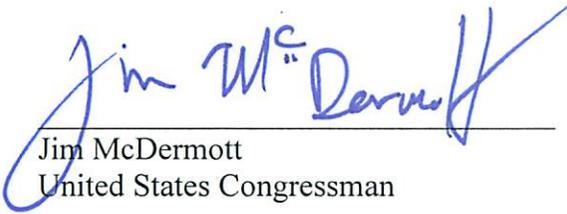
Norm Dicks
United States Congressman



Dave Reichert
United States Congressman



Jay Inslee
United States Congressman



Jim McDermott
United States Congressman