



May 6, 2013

To whom it may concern:

As the Monitoring Program Performance Analyst for the Puget Sound Partnership, I support the research project that Pacific Biodiversity Institute has proposed to conduct related to the Inland Waters Harbor Porpoise. I also coordinate a technical workgroup on monitoring of marine mammals as part of the Puget Sound Ecosystem Monitoring Program (PSEMP). One of the knowledge gaps that this workgroup identified is the population status and trends of harbor porpoise, a resident species in Puget Sound.

The harbor porpoise is a Washington State Species of Concern, with little known about basic information such as population status, where they breed, what they eat and the impact of human pressures on their population is deficient. My agency leads the efforts to recover the health of Puget Sound and a stated goal of our Action Agenda is the protection and restoration of native diversity and abundance of Puget Sound species. Without more information about harbor porpoise, the region is hard pressed to effectively manage human activities to achieve this goal. The harbor porpoise is thought to be an apex predator and year-round resident of Puget Sound, and as such, has been discussed as a potential indicator of the success of recovery efforts within the confines of our workgroup.

The new data collected by Pacific Biodiversity Institute will help test a new research methodology, and, in concert with other established research programs in South Sound and the San Juan Islands, contribute meaningful information on the status of harbor porpoise and other marine life in Puget Sound. Further, by involving citizen scientists in the research process, this project contributes to scientific literacy, another one of the Puget Sound Partnership's recovery strategies, and furthermore and raises the profile of a marine mammal that is not yet very well known by the public.

I attended a workshop for harbor porpoise researchers and managers that PBI coordinated in February and I was gratified to see that gaps in our knowledge of the ecology of Puget Sound harbor porpoise were being identified through a scientific review and workshop. Our technical workgroup, which this project's principal investigator joined this past winter, is building on the findings and recommendations from that workshop by recommending additional indicators of ecosystem recovery.

Financial support from Washington Sea Grant would be very appropriate for this research project. The goals and measurable objectives of this research are aligned with the goals of our agency.

Sincerely,

Nathalie Hamel, Ph.D.
Monitoring Program Performance Analyst
Puget Sound Partnership