

Questions for the Record

SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION

“Nominations of Jessica Rosenworcel, to be a Commissioner and Chair of the Federal Communications Commission; Alvaro Bedoya, to be a Commissioner of the Federal Trade Commission; Jainey Bavishi, to be Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere, DOC; and Arun Venkataraman, to be Assistant Secretary of Commerce and Director General of the United States and Foreign Commercial Service, DOC”

10:00 AM, November 17, 2021
253 Russell Senate Office Building

Questions for the Record from Senator Cantwell to Ms. Jainey K. Bavishi

Habitat Restoration for Pacific Salmon Conservation.

Pacific salmon recovery will not happen without rapid advancement of habitat restoration project that has been limited by funding. In the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (“IIJA”) (P.L. 117-58), I secured significant funding in support of this effort. Specifically, the IIJA contains funding for salmon habitat restoration through NOAA’s Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund and several NOAA-based programs restore coastal habitats. In the Build Back Better (“BBB”) Act (H.R. 5376) that will soon be considered by the Senate, I have fought for historic funding level of funding for these projects as well as for stock assessments and fisheries science to help scientists identify the cause of salmon mortality at sea.

However, securing funding is the first step. Over the next five years, we will need to work with NOAA to implement these programs quickly and efficiently.

Question 1.

These funding levels are far beyond levels NOAA has received before and legislation demands they are spent quickly. If confirmed, what steps will you take to ensure salmon habitat restoration funding - as well as all IIJA and BBB funding - is distributed as quickly as possible and will be invested in projects that will have measurable outcomes?

Answer: I understand that Pacific salmon are critically important to the health and economy of the Pacific Northwest, and protecting these species and their habitat is a top priority for NOAA. If confirmed, I will work closely with staff in the National Marine Fisheries Service to expedite these funds as quickly as possible so that States, Tribes, and local stakeholders can continue their work to protect, conserve, and restore populations of salmon and their habitat. I will bring to bear my recent experience in administering resilience-oriented and other programs in New York City, where I manage – and must expedite – a \$20 billion portfolio to meet the critical needs of the city’s communities; many of which have been chronically underserved over the past several decades. I will also commit to working closely and regularly with you and your staff to ensure that we expedite the funds in line with your specific intent.

Question 2.

Tribal consultation will be essential in salmon habitat restoration funding distribution. How will NOAA work with Tribes to focus salmon restoration efforts toward projects that can recover salmon runs needed to support treaty fisheries and underserved communities?

Answer: Tribal communities play an important role in the recovery and restoration of salmon and engaging with local tribes on salmon restoration is a top priority for NOAA. If confirmed, I commit to working with you and Tribal communities on ways NOAA can engage meaningfully in salmon restoration and recovery in the Pacific Northwest to support treaty fisheries.

Question 3.

Salmon habitat restoration is needed to recover vital salmon runs. Concurrently, these projects can also boost carbon sequestration. Coastal ecosystems such as mangroves, tidal marshes, and seagrass meadows sequester and store more carbon per unit area than terrestrial forests. Investments in this “blue carbon” are an important step in reaching our climate goals and protecting our fragile ecosystems from climate change. What other investments in science and restoration can be done to help leverage NOAA’s habitat restoration efforts to also combat climate change and improve resilience?

Answer: Pacific salmon are critically important to our culture, recreation, and economy. If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about NOAA’s science for the recovery of Pacific salmon and their habitat, and working with our scientists in the National Marine Fisheries Service to ensure our habitat restoration efforts improve restoration and resilience of and sequestration of carbon in these coastal ecosystems.

Culverts.

The IIJA includes the first ever National Culvert Removal, Replacement and Restoration Grant program to restore salmon passage in blocked as a result of transportation infrastructure. This program will invest \$1 billion dollars in competitive grants to states, local governments, and Tribes to address salmon-blocking culverts.

Historically, infrastructure such as roads and railways were built in a manner to impede fish migration, which resulted in devastating impacts to salmon and other species. This program is a key part of our strategy to remediate aging infrastructure and recover salmon.

Question 1.

NOAA scientists have expertise in salmon and habitat restoration. If confirmed, can you ensure that NOAA will provide the salmon recovery scientific expertise to the Department of Transportation to support the National Culvert Removal, Replacement, and Restoration Grant Program?

Answer: I understand that partnerships among the Federal agencies, including the Department of Transportation, are key to restoring healthy salmon runs and securing the economic and cultural benefits they provide for future generations. If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about NOAA’s expertise in salmon and habitat restoration and commit to ensuring our scientists

continue to conduct the research, monitoring, and analyses needed to ensure Pacific salmon recovery. I look forward to working with you and our Federal partners on this important topic.