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**Testimony of
Bill Ryan, Assistant Director
Aquatic Resource Management Program
Department of State Lands
on
Senate Bill 846
Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
April 8, 2015**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on SB 846, which would establish a task force, administered by the Department of State Lands (DSL), to study Essential Salmonid Habitat and its relationship to “ditches and other man-made water conveyance channels” with regard to DSL’s removal and fill regulatory oversight.

DSL believes this concept deserves further consideration and research. Many water conveyance channels are not simply man-made ditches, but are natural waterways that have been straightened, narrowed, deepened and otherwise manipulated. These waterways often provide valuable habitat for salmon and other fish, as well as other ecological and water quality functions. Providing protections for salmon habitat and water quality while allowing necessary maintenance and management of water conveyance channels, and doing so without an unduly burdensome regulatory process, is a challenge.

There are opportunities to simplify the regulatory process and improve environmental outcomes related to managing water conveyance channels. A task force is one avenue to gather additional information from stakeholders and agency experts and to develop recommendations for legislation. It will likely take considerable staff time to chair the task force and to provide staffing and technical support. There will also be an indeterminate fiscal impact to pay for travel and other expenses for task force members.

Thank you and I will be happy to answer any questions.