



July 23, 2013

Nancy Sutley  
Chair, White House Council on Environmental Quality

David Agnew  
Director, White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs

Dear Chair Sutley and Director Agnew,

I am writing to nominate King County Executive Dow Constantine to serve on President Obama's recently announced State, Local, and Tribal Leaders Task Force on Climate Preparedness. Executive Constantine is enthusiastic about the opportunity to advise the Administration on key actions the federal government can take to better support local climate change preparedness and resilience.

King County is located on Puget Sound in Washington State. With more than 2 million people in 39 cities and unincorporated areas, it is the 14th most populous county in the nation. King County has a long legacy as a national leader on climate action and community resiliency, and Executive Constantine has been one of the earliest champions for climate change action in Washington State, first as a state legislator, then as an elected County Councilmember, and today as the King County Executive.

Executive Constantine is an innovator who uses a wide range of tools to reduce climate pollution and prepare for climate change impacts. King County was one of the first local governments in Washington State to fully integrate climate change considerations into its land use, transportation, facilities, health, and environmental policies. The county has pioneered technologies to capture greenhouse gases from wastewater treatment and solid waste disposal and today meets more than half of its operational energy needs from use and production of renewable energy. In 2010, the county adopted an Energy Plan with aggressive targets for improving energy efficiency in its buildings and vehicles. In 2012, King County, with support from EPA funding, became the first county in the nation to conduct an inventory of greenhouse gas emissions that factors in not only the traditional sectors of buildings and transportation, but also consumption of goods and services. Also in 2012, King County adopted its Strategic Climate Action Plan, which synthesizes King County's top priorities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and prepare for the effects of climate change.

In 2007, King County, in partnership with 39 cities, established a Countywide Flood Control District to support regional investments in reducing flood hazards. A key driver for creation of the Flood District was the desire to make King County's residents and businesses more resilient to the impacts of flooding, including future increased hazards due to the effects of climate change. The county is also identifying the impacts of climate change in a wide range of contexts, from public health to salmon recovery to agriculture and integrating this information into policy updates and program investments. King County

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uses innovative tools like its Transfer of Development Rights Program to protect forest lands that sequester carbon and help reduce climate change impacts related to flooding and to aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems. This spring, the county reached its ambitious goal of permanently protecting 200,000 acres of working forest land in the foothills of Cascade Mountains.

Executive Constantine can provide strong insights on the three climate resiliency topics to be addressed by the President's Task Force. Below are examples of King County efforts that illustrate why Executive Constantine would be a strong contributor:

- **Developing Information and Tools to Support Local Governments**

King County collaborated with University of Washington scientists and ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability as a co-lead for the widely respected and used guidebook: *Preparing for Climate Change – A Guidebook for Local, Regional, and State Governments*. King County has developed its own tools to assess potential sea level rise impacts to critical infrastructure like wastewater treatment plants and has shared these tools across the region. Executive Constantine also launched the King County-Cities Climate Collaboration in 2011 to pool resources and share local knowledge about practical tools to respond to climate change.

- **Removing Barriers to Investments in Resilience**

King County is working collaboratively with federal agencies to address key barriers to climate resiliency, including at the intersection of salmon conservation and floodplain management. King County and much of the region are investing millions of dollars in salmon recovery mandated under the Endangered Species Act. Rising temperatures are a key threat to salmon survival and maintaining trees along rivers is essential for maintaining cool and clean water and for salmon habitat and food. Unfortunately, current Army Corps of Engineers standards for levee maintenance require removal of most trees from levees. The King County Flood District, in partnership with the Corps, has initiated development of a "Systemwide Improvement Framework" (SWIF), one of the first in the nation, to address these conflicts and develop a new approach that meets both flood and habitat needs in the face of rapidly warming temperatures.

- **Modernizing Grant and Loan Programs to Better Support Local Efforts**

King County was one of the earliest adopters of new approaches to flood disaster mitigation and has benefited from federal grants to relocate and elevate at-risk homes *before* the next disaster. King County has been making steady progress in updating floodplain maps that are the basis for development regulations and flood insurance requirements. However, while FEMA reimburses local agencies for updating their floodplain maps, it does not reimburse for maps that account for projections of climate change impacts on future flooding. Revising the federal floodplain mapping program to account for climate impacts is an example of how federal programs could be modified to better support local efforts to improve climate preparedness.

King County actions to reduce climate pollution and prepare for the impacts of climate change reflect a guiding principle that environmental sustainability and economic prosperity go hand-in-hand. King County is reaching out to businesses to reduce climate pollution and prepare for the impacts of climate change through forums like the recent GoGreen Conference and King County GreenTools Program. In September, the Executive will join industry leaders in convening a Disaster Recovery CEO Leadership Summit in recognition of the central role businesses play in making our economy more resilient in the face of disasters like flooding.

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Links to additional information about Executive Constantine and King County climate changes programs are attached.

We applaud President Obama's recent call for climate change action. Executive Constantine has a strong track record as a leader, innovator, and collaborator on climate issues. We urge you to appoint him to the President's Task Force on Climate Preparedness.

Sincerely,



Gregg Small  
Executive Director

**Links to Additional Information:**

Biography of King County Executive Dow Constantine:  
<http://www.kingcounty.gov/exec/constantine/biography.aspx>

King County Climate Change Action:  
<http://www.kingcounty.gov/climate>

King County 2012 Annual Report of King County's Climate Change, Energy, Green Building and Environmental Purchasing Programs (Published June 2013):  
<http://www.kingcounty.gov/environment/climate/king-county/annual-reports/sustainability-report.aspx>

King County Strategic Climate Action Plan: <http://www.kingcounty.gov/environment/climate/king-county/climate-action-plan.aspx>

*Preparing for Climate Change – A Guidebook for Local, Regional, and State Governments:*  
<http://www.cses.washington.edu/db/pdf/snoveretalgb574.pdf>

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