



# Director Bellon's Testimony

## Water Quality Standards

Below are Maia Bellon's oral comments, given at the Sept. 25 EPA public hearing on EPA's proposed changes to the water quality standards in Washington.

### Testimony

- Good afternoon. My name is Maia Bellon, and I am the Director of the Washington State Department of Ecology. I am here to personally deliver Washington's eighth formal communication to EPA opposing your repeal of our fish consumption rule.
- While our previous attempts have been disregarded, and, while EPA has refused to talk to Washingtonians about this repeal that affects ONLY our state, we are not giving up, because the people of Washington State are counting on us.
- Our rule—that EPA unilaterally repealed—determines how we protect the health of Washingtonians who eat fish—such as salmon and trout from our marine and fresh waters.
- Not only does our rule keep our waters clean for every Washingtonian, it also provides regulatory certainty for businesses and municipalities.
- That is because the plan to implement our rule was developed by Washington businesses, Native American tribes and communities – not by politicians in DC.
- We spent as much time and energy on our practical implementation plan as we did on the standards themselves. Your action puts that at risk.
- But EPA has disregarded our state's work to find common ground and make progress on achieving both clean water and economic prosperity.
- EPA treats these concepts as mutually exclusive. They are not. Washington State is proof that we can maintain a healthy environment in harmony with a strong economy.
- Not only is EPA's repeal regressive – it is illegal.
- As the federal agency that stewards the Clean Water Act, EPA knows there are only two circumstances under which you can repeal Washington's rule:
  - One – if we ask you to do so and
  - Two – if our rule is not protective enough.

- Neither of these circumstances exist.
- So, why is EPA forging ahead on illegally repealing and replacing Washington's rule when your actions are opposed by:
  - Washington's governor
  - The attorney general
  - The Department of Ecology
  - State legislators
  - Washington's Native American tribes
  - And our residents
- It is because this EPA is dead set on systematically dismantling clean water protections and states' rights.
- To this, Washington State says "No."
- I am here to say, unequivocally, that Washingtonians deserve better. Our lakes, rivers, and the Puget Sound deserve better. Our children and future generations deserve better.
- So we will not back down. And once again, we demand that you withdraw this misguided proposal.
- It is time for EPA to stand aside and let us protect our waters the Washington way.
- Thank you.