Joint Statement of Intent to Cooperate
on Adapting to and Preparing for Climate Change in Washington

Climate change is threatening the safety and security of our communities and impacting infrastructure and natural and working lands across Washington. Threats such as drought, flooding, extreme heat, coastal hazards, and wildfires are becoming more frequent and more severe. This has led to consequences for our state's economy, environment, and the health and safety of residents, especially those most vulnerable, including communities experiencing health disparities, unstable housing, and other social and economic challenges.

In 2023, the Legislature directed the Department of Ecology, together with nine partner agencies, to develop the state's integrated climate change response strategy (RCW 70A.05). Published in September 2024, the *Washington State Climate Resilience Strategy* ("strategy") identifies actions state agencies will take to help communities, infrastructure, and natural and working lands across Washington prepare for and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

As part of this effort, the Legislature directed agencies to provide a recommendation to the Governor's office and relevant committees of the Legislature of a durable structure for coordinating and implementing the strategy (RCW 70A.05.020). As published in the strategy, agencies recommended establishing an Interagency Climate Resilience Coordination Council ("Council") to carry out this work.

The Council will be comprised of the Directors or Secretaries, or their delegates, of each of the listed agencies and will be co-chaired by the Commissioner of Public Lands and the Director of the Washington State Department of Ecology. The Council will meet a minimum of twice per year to establish priorities, guide interagency coordination and implementation of the strategy, and support adaptive management, including future updates to the strategy required every four years. When appropriate, the Council may engage additional agencies, beyond those listed here, and other partners to support its work.

This joint statement builds upon the vision and goals outlined in the strategy and affirms our commitment to interagency collaboration in achieving a climate resilient Washington.

We envision a future where state agencies are equipped to prepare for, respond to, and recover from current and projected climate impacts in an integrated, strategic, equitable, and durable manner. As a result, Washington and its residents will be safer, healthier, and more resilient, with reduced vulnerability and risk to climate change.

To achieve a more climate resilient Washington, we commit to the following guiding principles:

- **Reduce risks and lessen vulnerabilities.**
  Flooding, drought, and wildfires are not new to Washington, but climate change is making them more frequent and severe. Increasing the pace and scale of preparedness and risk reduction efforts will pay dividends when these events occur. By addressing known vulnerabilities with proven risk reduction strategies, we can reduce exposure, protect people and resources, and lessen impacts on the communities we serve.

- **Promote safe, healthy, and vibrant communities.**
  Climate change impacts everyone in Washington, but not equally. Some groups, like the elderly, children, and people with underlying health conditions, are especially sensitive to harm from climate impacts. By working across state government, we can ensure that our efforts benefit all Washingtonians, intentionally prioritizing those most vulnerable.

- **Advance environmental justice and deliver more equitable outcomes.**
  The impacts of climate change are also shaped by social and economic factors that influence the vulnerability of different communities. Long histories of unfair

practices and inequities—such as discriminatory housing policies, disproportionate pollution exposure, and limited economic investment—restrict a community's ability to prepare for and respond to climate change impacts. Groups including Tribes, communities of color, immigrants, refugees, and low-income residents have simultaneously experienced underinvestment, greater barriers, and increased exposure to climate hazards. We will advance more equitable outcomes by meaningfully engaging communities and prioritizing actions that benefit historically underserved populations in all parts of Washington.

- **Responsibly steward public resources.**
  As state agencies, our mission is to serve the people of Washington by enhancing efficiency, promoting transparency and accountability, and ensuring the responsible use of taxpayer dollars. By integrating climate resilience into our funding decisions and operations, we will ensure state investments support projects and programs that deliver essential services, make communities more resilient to climate change, and reduce future costs by minimizing the need for premature rebuilding, extensive maintenance, and emergency repairs.

We are committed to this work and agree on the importance of working together to more seamlessly serve Washingtonians. By strengthening planning, coordination, communication, preparedness, and response, we can provide better support to the communities we serve. While the specific actions and resources may vary by agency, implementing the strategy is a shared commitment across all our agencies.

Co-Chair, Dave Upthegrove
Commissioner of Public Lands
Washington State Department of Natural Resources

Co-Chair, Casey D. Sixkiller
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