

WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF HEALTH

Date: November 8, 2023

To: Washington State Board of Health Members

From: Patty Hayes, Board Chair
Kate Dean, Board Member

Subject: Climate Change Storytelling Panel

Background and Summary:

Under the authority of RCW 43.20.050(1), the State Board of Health (Board) is directed to serve as a public forum. The Board is committed to monitoring the health effects of climate change and is hosting a storytelling panel to engage and learn how climate change is impacting Tribes and communities that are overburdened in Washington state. Climate change is a high priority and part of the Board's current strategic plan.

Climate change will impact every part and everyone in Washington State in some way. Climate change impacts health across a broad spectrum of areas, including air quality, drinking water, extreme heat, flooding, and shellfish. Human activities have expedited the increase in atmospheric levels of greenhouse gases at an unprecedented rate. It is causing the earth's climate to rapidly warm, leading to rising sea levels, and extreme climate and environmental events. The Board recognizes that the effects of climate change are not equally dispersed and certain regions and populations will experience more dramatic and consequential results.

The Board will hear directly from Tribes and communities that are overburdened about how climate change has impacted their communities and health. The Board will also learn about plans or efforts that communities are engaged in to help mitigate the effects of the changing climate. The panel is an opportunity for the Board to hear concerns and experiences from different communities, so the Board can align future initiatives with the needs of people living in Washington state. The concerns and experiences shared by panel members will also help the Board to prioritize topics to focus on within their authority related to climate change.

The Panel consists of four members representing communities from across the state. These individuals serve their communities in many ways, each with a special focus on the impacts of climate change. The panel includes:

- Elaine Harvey, Watershed Department Manager, Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission
- Paulina Lopez, Executive Director, Duwamish River Community Coalition
- Ryan Oelrich, Executive Director, Priority Spokane & Spokane City Council Member
- Sue Sullivan, Environmental Health Manager, Whatcom County

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This informational briefing involves no Board action. The information shared today will be used to inform the future work of the Board. Board staff will inform panel participants of how their shared insights have impacted the work of the Board.

Staff

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