

Breckel appointed chair of state's Salmon Recovery Funding Board

By staff and wire reports

OLYMPIA - The Salmon Recovery Funding Board, which awards approximately \$80 million biennially to projects to improve salmon habitat, will see a change in leadership.

Jeff Breckel, 70, from Stevenson, Washington, is the new chair of the funding board. Breckel has more than 20 years of experience in salmon recovery, much of it interacting with the funding board.

Before joining the board in 2016, Breckel served for 18 years as the executive director of the Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board. While there, he led the board from its inception, through writing the first salmon recovery plan in the state to be federally adopted, to seeing that same plan implemented.



Breckel

He also has served as a charter member of the Lead Entity Advisory Group, a collection of watershed-based recovery organizations, and as past chair of the Council of Salmon Recovery Regional Organizations. He co-chairs the state Salmon Recovery Network, a partnership of diverse organizations engaged in salmon recovery in Washington.

Breckel has extensive experience in other natural resource issues. Before leading the Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board, he served as a nuclear waste policy adviser for the Governor's Office and Washington State Department of Ecology. Prior to that, he was executive director of the Columbia River Gorge Commission.

"We are thrilled that Jeff will step into this leadership role with the board," said Kaleen Cottingham, director of the Recreation and Conservation Office, which provides support to the Salmon Recovery Funding Board.

"His career has focused on bringing people with different interests together to deal with pressing environmental issues, whether it was protection of the Columbia River Gorge, the cleanup of the Hanford nuclear reservation, salmon recovery or water supply issues for people and fish. That skill will help the board as it works through other tough issues, such as the impact of climate change on salmon."

Breckel will replace Phil Rockefeller, a longtime salmon recovery advocate who has been a member of the Salmon Recovery Funding Board since 2011 and chair

since 2019.

Rockefeller, 82, from Bainbridge Island, announced his retirement from the board so he could spend more time with his family. Rockefeller is the second-longest serving member in the board's 20-year history.

Rockefeller has a long and distinguished career as an advocate for the environment. He was a policy assistant to Governor John Spellman, served as a member of the state House of Representatives and twice was elected to the state Senate. He was a recipient of the Washington Conservation Voters' Legislator of the Year award.

After leaving the Senate in 2011, he was appointed by Gov. Christine Gregoire to represent Washington on the multistate Northwest Power and Conservation Council and to the state Salmon Recovery Funding Board.