

Handout @ 9/9/08 G-MNR mtg.
2008-30191



SNOQUALMIE WATERSHED FORUM

April 2, 2008



- Carnation
- Duvall
- King County
- North Bend
- Snoqualmie
- Snoqualmie Tribe

The Honorable Julia Patterson
 Chair
 Metropolitan King County Council
 516 Third Avenue, Room 1200
 Seattle, Washington 98104

RE: Placement of wood in rivers to restore natural processes

Dear Chair Patterson:

On behalf of the Snoqualmie Watershed Forum, we are writing to reaffirm our support for the placement of wood in rivers as a key component of our salmon recovery plan. The Snoqualmie Forum is a partnership between King County, the Snoqualmie Tribe, and the cities of Duvall, Carnation, North Bend and Snoqualmie. The Forum provides a mechanism for coordinating and implementing water resource and habitat projects in the Snoqualmie and South Fork Skykomish Watersheds.

Our member jurisdictions, including King County, were key participants in the development of the Snohomish River Basin Salmon Conservation Plan and are currently striving to meet its ten-year implementation goals. Scientific analysis in the plan showed that 70% of the Chinook bearing rivers in the Snohomish lack large wood and feature degraded riparian conditions. It is one reason Chinook salmon in our basin are thought to be at only 4% of historical levels. Thus, key recommendations include the retention of natural wood in our rivers and the construction of 16-25 new log jams by 2015 in the King County portion of Water Resource Inventory Area 7, which includes the Snoqualmie and South Fork Skykomish watersheds.

River recreation is a cherished thread in the fabric of the Snoqualmie watershed. The Snoqualmie, Tolt and Raging Rivers - as well as numerous smaller tributaries - support recreation year-round, including fishing, boating, swimming, wildlife viewing and other activities. At the same time, not all of our citizens and visitors are intimately aware of the inherent risks associated with those activities. The swift and often murky waters of our large rivers are naturally hazardous places. Log jams are integral parts of that environment, and support many of the activities that we enjoy.

The Snoqualmie Watershed Forum recognizes that under some circumstances, wood in rivers can add to the hazards encountered by river users. We do not support efforts to curtail restoration of natural processes solely to reduce these risks. However, where there are opportunities to implement restoration actions in a way that reduces risk without compromising ecological integrity, we support efforts to do so. In other words, if there are ecologically equivalent choices for the placement of a large wood jam, the relative risk to river users is a prudent and reasonable consideration in the site-selection process.

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The Snoqualmie Watershed Forum commends King County's past and current efforts working with the boating and other recreational communities to standardize its decision process for large wood placement. We encourage the County to create a process that considers public safety, but does not stall and unduly hinder our salmon recovery efforts.

As a next step, we suggest that King County work collaboratively with the recreation community to conduct a river-recreation inventory of all major rivers in King County. The purpose of the inventory would be to:

- identify the types of recreational activities (e.g., bank fishing, boating, rafting, swimming), access points, and their seasonal intensity at specific locations,
- characterize the age of recreation participants,
- assess the level of compliance with reasonable safety precautions, such as the use of Personal Flotation Devices, and
- identify the need and opportunities for public outreach and education related to river safety.

The goals of the inventory would be to develop a location-specific assessment of risk to recreational users that can be readily integrated into the site-selection process for restoration activities, and to provide baseline information for addressing outreach and education needs.

In the Snoqualmie Watershed, we truly appreciate the beauty of our wild rivers and the opportunities they provide to us. Of course we care for the personal safety of our residents and visitors alike, but personal responsibility and the recognition of risk are also a part of river recreation. We have all worked too hard and invested too much in our salmon recovery plans to compromise these important objectives. Through thoughtful consideration of the issue, we believe both goals can be achieved – bringing back our salmon and improving public safety.

Sincerely,



Charles Peterson
Councilmember, City of Snoqualmie
Chair, Snoqualmie Watershed Forum



Elizabeth Walker
Councilmember, City of Duvall
Vice-Chair

Cc: Members of the Snoqualmie Watershed Forum