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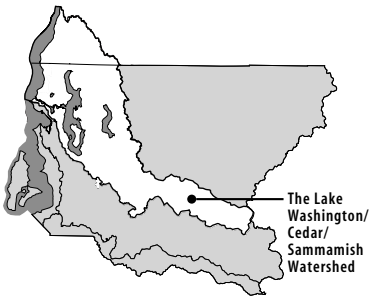
Seattle
Shoreline
Snohomish County

The Boeing Company
Cedar River Council
Friends of Issaquah Salmon Hatchery
Greater Maple Valley Area Council
Greater Seattle Chamber of Commerce
Mid-Sound Fisheries Enhancement Group
Northwest Marine Trade Association
Save Lake Sammamish
Sustainable Fisheries Foundation
Trout Unlimited

US Army Corps of Engineers
Washington Department of Ecology
Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Washington Department of Natural Resources
Washington Association of Sewer and Water Districts
King Conservation District

201 S. Jackson Street, 6th Floor
Seattle, WA 98104
September 25, 2003



Mr. Rob Walton
Assistant Regional Administrator for Salmon Recovery
NOAA – National Marine Fisheries Service
525 NE Oregon Street, Suite 510
Portland, OR 97232

Dear Mr. Walton:

The WRIA 8 Steering Committee is actively engaged in developing a Salmon Conservation Plan for the Lake Washington/Cedar/Sammamish Watershed. At the May 6, 2003, Technical Recovery Team–Puget Sound Shared Strategy workshop on Viable Salmonid Populations, it was acknowledged that the time was ripe for NOAA Fisheries to comment on the reasonableness of several policy assumptions that underpin the WRIA 8 plan.

The WRIA 8 Steering Committee is attempting to reconcile habitat planning with hatchery and harvest decisions made by other entities at state, tribal, and federal levels. We would appreciate opinions and recommendations from NOAA Fisheries on the following questions:

1. **Is it correct to assume that measures to recover chinook salmon will accommodate continued hatchery production of sockeye salmon at the Cedar River hatchery?**

Context: Baker Lake sockeye are not native to WRIA 8, but have taken advantage of the substantial alterations in the basin's flow patterns and established self-sustaining runs to several locations within the Lake Washington basin. Population levels periodically support recreational and tribal harvest. The Lake Washington sockeye run is recognized as the largest sockeye run in the contiguous 48 states. The City of Seattle expects to continue augmenting the natural spawning of sockeye in the Cedar River with a permanent hatchery at Landsburg. The Lake Washington system appears to be highly productive, but a significant increase in sockeye population may affect chinook predation rates and the productivity of the population. We understand that the hatchery program includes an adaptive management program that is designed to detect and minimize or avoid adverse effects on chinook, should they occur.

Financial support provided by the signers of the interlocal agreement to cost-share watershed planning in WRIA 8: Beaux Arts Village, Bellevue, Bothell, Clyde Hill, Edmonds, Hunts Point, Issaquah, Kenmore, Kent, KIng County, Kirkland, Lake Forest Park, Maple Valley, Medina, Mercer Island, Mill Creek, Mountlake Terrace, Mukilteo, Newcastle, Redmond, Renton, Sammamish, Seattle, Shoreline, Snohomish County, Woodinville and Yarrow Point

For purposes of our planning, we are proceeding on the premise that the proposed permanent Cedar River sockeye hatchery is a given, in that the hatchery is an element of the NOAA Fisheries-approved Cedar River Watershed Habitat Conservation Plan — recognizing that the final decisions regarding the design, capacity, operating guidelines, and adaptive management features of the program are subject to the completion of the required project-specific environmental review process. As NOAA Fisheries is a signatory to the Landsburg Mitigation Agreement and represented on the Anadromous Fish Committee that is overseeing the design of the hatchery and the formulation of its operating plan, we presume that safeguards are and will be in place to ensure that the hatchery will have no significant adverse impact on the recovery of wild chinook populations in WRIA 8. Please confirm that this understanding is correct.

2. **Will the Issaquah hatchery be permitted to continue producing chinook salmon to supplement harvest?**

Context: The Issaquah hatchery augments chinook populations to ensure harvestable populations of chinook. Tribal and recreational harvests are very important in WRIA 8.

3. **Is it reasonable to believe that predation on chinook can be significantly reduced by reducing the abundance, preferred prey, and composition of the predator community in the lake?**

Context: Predation of chinook juveniles in Lake Washington by bass and other piscivorous species is significant. Attempts could be made to harvest or otherwise kill the non-native predators or alternatively, increase the abundance of alternative prey species such as crayfish.

4. **Given NOAA's years of experience and expertise in understanding of the viability of chinook and other salmon populations in Puget Sound, how can the WRIA 8 plan now best contribute to broad goals of salmon recovery and de-listing of chinook in the ESU?**

Context: The Technical Recovery Team and others have been studying options for salmon recovery in the Puget Sound for several years since the WRIA 8 recovery planning process began. The mission of the WRIA 8 process as approved by the Steering Committee in 1999 was to "preserve, protect and restore habitat with the intent to recover sustainable, genetically diverse, harvestable populations of naturally-spawning chinook salmon". NOAA, or other entities acting with NOAA's approval, need to ensure that what WRIA 8 is striving for and accomplishing fit with recovery in the ESU as a whole.

Thank you very much for your assistance. Our Watershed Coordinator has been working with your staff to invite you to our upcoming meetings, September 25 or

October 23, 2003, (3:30 to 5:30 PM, Mercer Island Community Center). We hope that you will be able to attend so that we may discuss these issues with you directly and so that we can understand your approach to working with local governments and stakeholder interests. We look forward to continued opportunities to discuss WRIA 8 technical and policy issues with NOAA Fisheries. Your comments and perhaps a Memorandum of Understanding will help clarify some of our assumptions about advance implementation of salmon recovery.

Sincerely,

Margaret Pageler
Seattle City Council
WRIA 8 Steering Committee Co-Chair

Larry Phillips
King County Council
WRIA 8 Steering Committee Co-Chair

cc: WRIA 8 Steering Committee members
WRIA 8 Technical Committee members
Jane Lamensdorf-Bucher, WRIA 8 Watershed Coordinator