

American Rivers  
Rebecca Woder, President  
1025 Vermont Ave NW, Suite 720  
Washington, DC 20005  
Phone: 202-347-7550  
Fax: 202-347-9240

Dear Rebecca:

I would like to thank the American Rivers organization for contacting me with regard to the Skykomish "Sky" River. Each year you issue a report of endangered rivers, a list which is compiled by self-nominations from activists and not grounded science. Perhaps your Seattle office should visit the Duwamish River near their offices to see an example of a river impacted by development and industry.

Unfortunately, your organization hasn't participated in our Salmon Recovery Forum, three watershed recovery forums that cover our area, the special NOAA hearing on steelhead recovery we held last month, the critical areas ordinance process or the ten year update. As such you may not be aware of the steps that we are taking to address many, if not all of the concerns you outline in your report.

In the future, I would strongly encourage you to do so, instead of providing the media with a much hyped report that we were not privy to until well after media deadlines had passed for the day.

As this is the first time I have had contact with your office, I would like to educate you about the efforts that Snohomish County has taken on the Sky and more importantly, protection throughout the greater basin area. Further, I encourage you to make an appointment to visit with me, as many other environmental groups and activists have, to share their concerns.

Attached, please find a list of specific projects we are working on in the Sky River Basin. I am also attaching a list of publicly scheduled meetings that you should attend with regard to our 10-year comprehensive plan update. As you may know, Council received this document just two days ago and are just beginning to move forward with our own deliberations.

While I have received over 300 emails from some of your activists, nearly all of them have come from people who do not live in our state. I suggest that you ask your local activists, especially those who live in the Sky River basin, to attend our meetings, engage in the process and provide input.

As you know, in 1999, the federal government listed Chinook salmon and bull trout as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. Coho salmon is now a species of concern under the act. In response to these federal listings, the Snohomish Basin Salmon Recovery Forum has created the Draft Salmon Conservation Recovery Plan to guide the protection and restoration of salmon in the Snohomish River Basin---where the Skykomish River also lies. At 1,856 square miles, the basin is the second largest watershed draining to Puget Sound.

Those who live and work within this basin take pride in our communities that span from the urban areas of Everett to the rural quality of life that includes small towns, farms, and forestry. We want to protect and restore salmon runs that are vital to our local culture, identity, pride and economy.

The Snohomish County Council is represented on three such watershed recovery forums, known as "WRIAs." WRIA 7 is the forum where the Snohomish Basin is discussed and where I represent the Snohomish County Council in that forum. Councilmen Dave Gossett and John Koster also participate in the other two WRIA groups that address the other watersheds that lie in our county.

For the last several years, my group, WRIA 7\* has worked on a scientifically based and feasible course of action over the next decade to being restoring multi-species fish populations and protecting the basin. The plan is based on a careful review of scientific data, historical records, and social and economic considerations. It provides clear direction to local governments, agencies, interest groups, citizens, and other interested parties on recovery action that will be most beneficial, where they should occur, and when they should happen.

Currently the WRIA 7 plan is undergoing its final internal review and is set for final adoption in early June. That plan will recommend that recovery options focus on improving habitat quantity and quality in the nearshore, estuary and mainstems to get listed species back on track. Further, it recommends that we minimize habitat losses and make habitat gains through restoration throughout the basin.

Throughout this process, we have solicited input from citizens, non-profits, activists and government groups. I would encourage American Rivers to obtain a copy of the WRIA plan that already addresses many of the concerns that they raise in their own report.

It is a holistic approach to habitat improvement, recognizing urban, rural, and agricultural and forestry uses of the surrounding land. It is important to note that 75% of the basin is forestry, with 50% under federal control and the remaining under state and private control. The plan calls for actions related to non-wilderness portions of the basin to conserve intact forest lands, use of sustainable forestry and stewardship and discouraging the conversion of forest lands to urban development.

A variety of tools to achieve the goals of the plan will also be proposed and include: policy, regulatory and programmatic actions to protect currently intact habitat conditions; comprehensive technical assistance and public outreach; incentive programs to encourage and reward positive actions, such as tax/fee reductions, transfer of development rights, and streamlined permits.

Snohomish County also has unique programs in place that we have implemented over the past three years that also work to preserve farmlands and restore habitat. We are implementing a pilot transfer of development rights program and we are also home to many wetland mitigation banks.

In addition to the WRIA work that we have done, this Council has also authorized our Surface Water Management department, headed by Joan Lee, to perform the following functions in the Sky River basin:

#### Ongoing County Actions Related to Conservation in the Skykomish River Watershed

1. Lead Entity for Snohomish River Basin (WRIA 7) Salmon Recovery Efforts:
  - Near Term Action Plan
  - Snohomish Forum – staffed and led this multi-stakeholder effort to develop the recovery plan.
  - “Draft Snohomish River Basin Salmon Conservation Plan”, July, 2004 – plan is currently being revised to produce a final plan by June, 2005.
  - Extensive public involvement in developing the conservation plan.
  - Staff resources committed to the watershed thru the Snohomish Technical Committee.
  - Plan includes multiple projects by the County and other stakeholders targeted to protect and improve the river.
  - Planning process has widespread support and positions the County well to obtain grants and other funding for conservation and restoration projects. This includes the

recently awarded Community Salmon Fund (\$120K) grant which will fund small habitat projects in WRIA 7 with specific project selection to take place in fall 2005.

2. Braided Reach Analysis - Currently underway, a project to collect and analyze Skykomish River data to develop restoration projects, infrastructure protection, and improve water quality.
3. Water Quality Grant – Snohomish Large River Survey – includes the Skykomish River to collect water quality and habitat data.
4. Skykomish River Gaging network – river flow and rainfall gaging network that provides real time data for flood emergencies as well as long term data used for calibrating hydrologic models and restoration actions.
5. Haskell Slough – assisted landowner with construction of the avulsion barrier and water quality improvements to Haskell Slough.
6. Support landowners thru Watershed Steward actions to find ways to preserve and restore habitat while assisting landowners.
7. Skykomish Abandoned Railroad Bridge – assisting State DNR staff with removing the hazardous bridge near Monroe.
8. Twin Rivers land acquisition – County acquired land at the confluence of the Skykomish and Snoqualmie Rivers and is currently planning and designing a channel restoration project.
9. Other actions in the Skykomish watershed:  
Conservation and restoration in the Snohomish Estuary – Spencer Island, Smith Island, North Ebey Island conservation and restoration projects.
10. County actively developing an agriculture initiative to support farmers in the Skykomish and other parts of the County. Preservation of farming is considered an important component of preserving salmon habitat in the watershed.
11. Cooperative Bank Stabilization Program – support landowners by designing and helping construct habitat friendly bank stabilization projects.
12. County supports the pilot methane digester project to treat dairy waste and improve water quality by limiting dairy waste runoff.
13. Woods Creek – In recent years SWM has repaired several fish blockage culverts in this tributary to the Skykomish River and is actively pursuing restoration thru our Watershed Steward in the Woods Creek watershed. Water quality monitoring is also being conducted.
14. Lake Management Activities in the Skykomish Basin:
  - Roesiger—Phase I Restoration Study, monitoring (SWM staff/volunteers), aquatic plant control (Eurasian watermilfoil)
  - Cochran—monitoring (SWM staff/volunteers)
  - Wagner—monitoring (SWM staff)

Finally, I was pleased to read in a local Sky River basin paper this morning, The Monroe Monitor, that an investigation of the potential drought across the region brings some good news for residents of the Sky River.

*“One of the advantages we have is a very large reservoir,” said Jim Miller, engineering superintendent for the Everett water department. That reservoir, from which the Everett and the Sky River basin dwellers draw drinking water, is man-made Spada Lake, located high above Sultan on the Sultan River, a tributary of the Skykomish.*

*Heavy rains have recently restored some of the water to the mountains, making up for a snowpack lighter even than 1977’s record setting lows.”*

The Everett water department has also reported that they are at 95% of where we would normally be now, with the next three months forecasted to be wetter than usual.

I hope that this statement brings to light a more factual based picture of the Sky River and our efforts to protect and preserve the area. As always, if you have any questions, please feel free to contact my office at: 425-388-3494.

Best regards,

Jeff Sax, District 5  
Snohomish County Council

JS/jh

Attachments

For further explanation of the Snohomish Basin Salmon Recovery Forum, see the *Preliminary Final Draft Snohomish River Basin Salmon Conservation Plan* on Snohomish County’s website at:

[http://www1.co.snohomish.wa.us/Departments/Public\\_Works/Divisions/SWM/About/Work\\_Areas/Habitat/Salmon/Snohomish/Draft\\_Snohomish\\_Basin\\_Salmon\\_Conservation\\_Plan.htm](http://www1.co.snohomish.wa.us/Departments/Public_Works/Divisions/SWM/About/Work_Areas/Habitat/Salmon/Snohomish/Draft_Snohomish_Basin_Salmon_Conservation_Plan.htm)

*\*In addition to Snohomish County Councilman Jeff Sax and King County Councilwoman Carolyn Edmonds, other forum members include: Cascade Land Conservancy, Cities of: Carnation, Duvall, Everett, Gold Bar, Granite Falls, Index, Lake Stevens, Marysville, Monroe, North Bend, Seattle, Snohomish, Snoqualmie, Sultan; Coordinated Diking Council; CrossValley Water District; East King County Regional Water Association; King Conservation District; King County Agriculture; Master Builder’s Association; Pilchuk Audobon Society; Port of Everett; Recreational Interests & citizens; Snohomish Conservation District; Snohomish County; Snohomish County PUD; Snohomish County Sportsmen’s Association; Stilly-Snohomish Fisheries Enhancement Task Force; The Boeing Company; The Tulalip Tribes; Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (ex-officio). The forum is co-chaired by Mark Sollitto, City of North Bend and Terry Williams, The Tulalip Tribes.*

**Urban Centers meeting for 128<sup>th</sup> Street**

**Purpose:** *To report back to the citizens on their design charette for the 128<sup>th</sup> St Urban Center; to give them the draft design for the center: and to give them dates and times for the 10 year update so they can testify if they wish.*

**Organizer:** *LRP Staff*

April 5<sup>th</sup> Voyager Middle School 6:30-8:30  
11711 4<sup>th</sup> Ave W  
Everett

**Upcoming Open Houses**

**Purpose:** *To provide the public the draft plan, policies and maps*

**Organizer:** *LRP staff*

Tuesday, April 19 5 – 8 pm  
East Administration Building, Main Conference Room, Everett 98201

Thursday, April 21 5 – 8 pm  
Alderwood Middle School Cafeteria  
20000 28<sup>th</sup> Avenue West  
Lynnwood, 98036

Thursday, April 28 5 – 8 pm  
Post Middle School Commons  
1220 East 5<sup>th</sup> Street  
Arlington, 98223

**Joint County Council / Planning Commission Briefings**

**Purpose:** *For the Council and Commission to be briefed on the plan, policies and maps.*

**Organizer:** *Council, Council staff, LRP staff*

Tuesday, April 26 Everett East Administration Building, Main Conf. Room  
1:30-3:30 p.m.

Tuesday, May 3 Everett East Administration Building, Main Conf. Room  
6:00-9:00 p.m. Only if needed for extra time.

**Joint County Council / Planning Commission Hearings – \*tentative**

**Purpose:** *For Council and Staff to hear the public's testimony on the plan.*

**Organizer:** *Council, Commission, Council staff and LRP staff.*

Tuesday, May 24 Everett East Administration Building, Main Conf. Room  
1:30-5:00 & 6:30-9:30 p.m.

Thursday, May 26 Arlington Stillaguamish Sr. Center  
6:30-9:30 p.m.

Wednesday, June 1 Monroe Monroe High School  
6:30-9:30 p.m.

Thursday, June 2 Lynnwood Lynnwood Convention Center  
6:30-9:30 p.m.

