

Robert Turner
Acting Director



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF FISHERIES

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December 16, 1992

Ms. Alice Kelly
Water Resources Section
Washington Department of Ecology
3190 160th Ave. S.E.
Bellevue, Washington 98008-5452

Subject: Closure of Carpenter Creek Watershed to Further Granting
of Water Rights - Carpenter Creek and Tributaries,
tributary of South Fork Skagit River, parts of Skagit
and Snohomish Counties, WRIA 03.0179-.0212

Dear Ms. Kelly:

The Carpenter Creek watershed is at a low elevation and is relatively stable compared to many other watersheds. It is a very generous system in the production of salmonid fishes. These include coho, chinook, and chum salmon, steelhead and cutthroat trout. They are produced naturally; there are no hatchery plants. The watershed is particularly good at producing coho salmon. The Skagit River population of coho salmon as a whole is a depressed or "weak" stock. Because of its depressed condition, fisheries management severely limits the commercial and sport catch of coho. This affects catch limits and seasons all the way from the ocean, through the Strait of Juan de Fuca, and into the Skagit River.

This watershed is somewhat unique in that all the upper parts of the streams are obviously streams, having gravel, shrubs and trees, in-stream fish habitat, etc., while the lower parts have been channelized through former marshes. Many miles of the lower section of Carpenter Creek is maintained by local Diking and Drainage Districts as an agricultural run-off ditch which locally is called "Hill Ditch". There is little if any spawning which occurs in this channelized portion, but there is significant juvenile rearing in it. All fish, juveniles and adults, must use it during their migrations.

Many of the smaller tributaries have low flow problems already. Some dry up in late spring/early summer and stay that way until the fall rains. Others become very shallow, and in sections, intermittent, which limits summer rearing for juveniles. They are all subject to warming at low flows, which decreases the amount of dissolved oxygen in the water. The "Hill Ditch" section becomes too warm and anaerobic to support salmonid fish except in the immediate vicinity of the mouths of inlet streams. Anything which diminishes the amount of cool water available to fish in these streams will have a serious negative impact on maintaining a viable and numerous fish population.

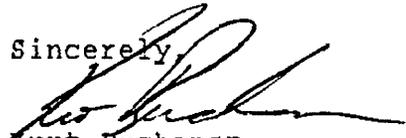
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There have been changes in this watershed since the WDF letter of 1975. A large proportion has been clearcut logged within the last 10 years, and parts of formerly forested or rural pasture land is becoming urbanized. Both the logging and urbanization will have significant negative impacts on this watershed, in part leading to higher peak flows in the winter, and lower flows during the summer-fall dry period. Further appropriation of water from this watershed should not occur if it will affect the already low flows during summer and early fall.

I am not aware of any stream flow gauging stations in this watershed. I am not aware of any minimum flows set for Carpenter Creek or any of its tributaries. In light of the development pressures in this watershed, minimum flows should be established on Carpenter Creek and for those streams most at risk.

If there any questions concerning these comments, please contact me at 428-1240.

Sincerely,



Kurt Buchanan
Regional Habitat Manager

cc: WDW - Mill Creek
WDF - Olympia