

JOSEPH R. BLUM
Director



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DEPT. OF ECOLOGY

STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF FISHERIES

333 E. Blackburn Road • Mount Vernon, Washington 98273-9006 • (206) 428-1568

April 15, 1992

Mr. Tom Culhane
Hydrogeologist, Water Resources Section
Washington Department of Ecology
3190 160th Ave SE
Bellevue, Washington 98008-5452

Subject: Continued Closure of Nookachamps Creek - Groundwater
Withdrawal

Dear Mr. Culhane:

I appreciate the opportunity to comment on this proposal. Please accept my apologies for an untimely response.

Nookachamps Creek has substantial runs of coho salmon, steelhead and cutthroat trout, with lesser number of chum, pink, and chinook salmon. Coho salmon juveniles have been caught in Mud Lake, the outlet of which goes right by the proposed well location of Country Cousins, Inc.

One of the main problems in the Nookachamps basin is low summer flow. This is particularly true through the lower 3-4 miles. As the summer progresses, the flows through this lower section get very sluggish, and the water warms up to temperatures higher than preferred by salmonids. In August and September, water quality gets particularly bad downstream of the Swan Road bridge, on your figure in the NE 1/4 of Section 10, about 1/2 mile from the proposed well location. By the time the stream gets downstream to the Francis Road bridge, NE 1/4 Section 4, the water can be brick red, very warm, and smell like manure. There are existing diary problems in this reach being investigated by other sections of your department. It has gotten so bad that it is likely that all early season adult salmon spawners which could potentially use Nookachamps Creek are blocked at its mouth by this polluted reach. The fall rains must clear this out and drop the temperature before substantial numbers of spawners will enter.

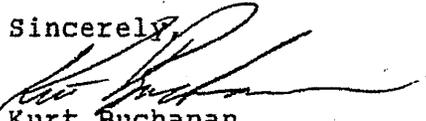
The letters written by the Game, and Fisheries Departments in the '40's and '50's stated that the stream was over-appropriated for water withdrawal at that time. There are many more people and cattle there now than then. Parts of the watershed are expanding rapidly now in population; demands to fully utilize existing water rights are increasing. To add another major water user in this area, particularly adjacent to the area with the worst low flow problem, is not a good idea.

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The Washington Department of Fisheries requests that you conti
to close Nookachamps Creek to further ground water and surface
water withdrawals. This condition of too little water and too
much demand is likely to continue into the future.

If there are any question's concerning these comments, please
contact me at 428-1240.

Sincerely,



Kurt Buchanan
Regional Habitat Manager

cc: C. Baker - DOE
B. Pfaff - Skagit County Health Department
T. Mueller - WDW, Mill Creek
L. Wasserman - SSC (tribes)
WDF - Olympia