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October 28, 2015

Miranda Wecker, Chairwoman
Washington State Fish and Wildlife Commission
600 Capitol Way N.
Olympia, WA 98501-1091

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FISH AND
WILDLIFE COMMISSION

RE: North Coast Steelhead Advisors Group's Recommendations

Dear Chairwoman Wecker and Members of the Commission:

The Forks City Council recently submitted a letter to voice the City's position on steelhead recommendations. A copy of that letter is attached. I am a publicly elected member of the Council and though I signed the letter, one other Council member and myself voted not to approve it in this final form.

I approve of the entire contents of the letter, except item (3) on page 2, concerning the use of bait. Adopting this extreme measure on the Quillayute River system above 3 Rivers (which includes the Sol Duc, Calawah and Bogachiel Rivers) is premature for a river system that is meeting its escapement goals.

The negative economic impact of this dramatic change to the regulations cannot be emphasized enough. Our fishing guides, local stores, restaurants, lodging establishments and City coffers all benefit greatly from this late winter / early spring fishery. It helps carry us through the winter, before the summer tourism season begins.

With proper study and preparation, perhaps this course of action will one day be warranted if wild steelhead runs are truly in jeopardy. At this point, they are not, at least in the Quillayute system. I doubt we are currently in a position to even measure the effect of a no-bait regulation on the fishery. While we have time, let's use the next few years to get accurate baseline statistics for bait vs. non-bait encounters and mortality.

We all want "to ensure the long term viability of our steelhead fishery", but let's do it in a way that does not further weaken an already delicate Forks / North Coast economy.

Thank you for your consideration.

Bill Brager

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