

From: Hennick, Doug G (DFW)
Sent: Thursday, April 04, 2013 9:42 AM
To: SEPADesk2 (DFW)
Cc: Brokaw, Loren (DFW); Bails, Jamie L (DFW)
Subject: MDNS 13-028 Stillwater Snoqualmie R. Revetment Removal - King Co

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this proposal. As Watershed Steward I have been involved with this project for several years, and I am cleared by my management to speak on behalf of the WDFW Region 4 Habitat Program.

We consider the project to be desirable and permissible, and the Mitigated Determination of Non-Significance to be fully adequate and not in need of any changes.

The project was wisely proposed by a conservation partner of WDFW (WFC) as a way to restore vital habitat processes required for Chinook salmon recovery. The proposal was coordinated with, and assisted by, restoration experts of King County, who have modeled riverine processes in this reach, and with extensive public input have successfully accomplished major restoration projects in this reach of the river and its major tributary, the Tolt River. The proponent of this project (WFC) accomplished extensive additional modeling to show that this specific proposal will not hurt WDFW's neighbors, and they have gained permission from bordering neighbors to cross their land with heavy equipment, as well as to remove riprap from that private property to expand the benefits of this proposed work on WDFW land. The WDFW Habitat Engineer reviewed the WFC models and plans, and determined they are high quality. WDFW Habitat Biologists have reviewed the plans and determined they will increase the quantity and quality of fish habitat on the WDFW site, and help complete the overall restoration of this river reach which has been so well started by King County. The proponent has partnered with Ducks Unlimited (DU) for construction management, indicating full support for this project by these two major non-profit restoration organizations.

The proponent and the WDFW Wildlife Area Restoration Coordinator have conducted two public meetings regarding this proposal and have found substantial public support. The public concerns about this project mainly center on the possibility of diminished hunting access to about 1/3 of the acreage of the Stillwater Wildlife Unit during about 20 days of average years due to the possibility of higher water levels and stronger currents in the normally dry old oxbow channels of the river which have to be waded across during floods for full hunting opportunities. Mitigation for this impact will be in the form of a separate project in which DU and WDFW attempt to get funding to replace the old foot bridge over Harris Creek, which was washed out several years ago. This bridge is the only practical access to the entire 1/3 of the Wildlife Unit near the restoration site, and providing that access should compensate for hunters not being able to wade on a substantially smaller acreage of this area during flood days.

Overall the WDFW Region 4 Habitat Program considers this to be an important and excellent project, with high potential for restoring natural amounts of habitat functions to a substantial amount of presently degraded riverbank and floodplain. We also think this project will increase the types of recreation opportunities on the Stillwater Unit by creating gravel beaches where overgrown riprap presently borders high velocity deep water, making walking and river contact extremely difficult and uncomfortable.

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