



State of Washington
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

Region 4 Office: 16018 Mill Creek Boulevard - Mill Creek, Washington 98012 - (425) 775-1311

September 17, 1998

Skagit County Public Works ATTN: Sky Miller
1111 Cleveland Ave.
Mount Vernon, Wa 98273

Dear Mr. Miller:

Enclosed you will find the HPA for this years dredging project on Hansen Creek. Once again, it reflects the results of negotiations between the desires for flood control, and the protection of fish life. There has been volumes of communication on this issue, for years. We have all made some progress, but not enough. The County has constructed, and maintained, a gravel retention basin upstream of the problem section. The gravel removal seems to be reflected in a deepening of the stream downstream, and a diminished need for dredging below SR 20. This was the original intent. The less frequent the dredging, the fewer fish are killed and the more the channel and bank vegetation can recover. We have been successful at minimizing the frequency of this dredging. But it still happens, at considerable cost to the Zone, and to fish production. The flap gate at the mouth of Red Creek is still a fish passage problem if the gate is not kept open. It is only to be closed for short times during floods. It is not clear whether this has been done consistently. The channel downstream of this flap gate still fills with gravel which backs water up on the Martinez property, more than he would like. The periodic dredging of Hansen Creek, and the continued concerns of fish passage into Red Creek are topics we should solve.

When you, John Abenroth, and I walked this problem section last, you had some interesting ideas on these issues. We discussed different ways we could deal with the gravel deposition and channel capacity problems below SR 20, the location of dikes, and the possible re-establishment of a functional floodplain. All these ideas need to be thoroughly fleshed out. You have designed some log structures to install in the stream to aid in local scour, and to provide fish habitat. You will be building these soon, and they should help. Our goal should be to provide for a reasonable flood control benefit for your rate-payers and the adjacent property owners, and to better protect the public's fish resource.

Within six months, it is likely that chinook salmon will become a listed species under the Endangered Species Act. Exactly how that listing may effect future dredging or other channel work in Hansen Creek is hard to say. What is clear is that there will be other Federal agencies reviewing our decisions, possibly with veto power. Agency flexibility on habitat issues will likely decrease. It is in our best interests, and the fish's, to devise a much better approach to the problems of Hansen Creek. I look forward to working with you on these solutions. Please let me know when we can meet.

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If you have any questions, please contact me at (360) 428-1240.

Sincerely,



Kurt Buchanan 428-1240
Area Habitat Biologist

cc: R. LaRock - SSC Fisheries
K. Bates - WDFW Engineering
T. Muller - WDFW Mill Creek
M. Walker - US Army Corps of Engineers