

Christie True, Director
King County Department of Natural Resources & Parks
201 S. Jackson Street, S. 700
Seattle, WA 98104-3855

March 22, 2012

Dear Christie,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the findings of the Independent Expert Review of Water and Land Resources Division's Project Scoping and Implementation Practices. The WRIA 8 Salmon Recovery Council commends King County for initiating this independent review of its river and floodplain management projects and programs. We are heartened that the independent panel of experts has concluded that King County's Water and Land Resources Division uses scientifically accepted principles and strategies for managing rivers and floodplains for the multiple objectives of protecting public safety, preventing property damage, recovering salmon and providing recreation.

The report affirms that there has been a paradigm shift in floodplain management from traditional strategies that focus on channelization and levees to new, more dynamic strategies which encourage setback levees, broader floodplain connections, increased wood recruitment and greater channel mobility. These new approaches improve habitat and reduce flood risks to people, homes and critical public infrastructure. King County's use of these more dynamic approaches to river and floodplain management, grounded in ecology and hydrology, are critical to our efforts to recover Chinook salmon in the Lake Washington/Cedar/Sammamish Watershed and meet our collective obligations under the Endangered Species Act. Many of the highest priority habitat projects in the WRIA 8 Chinook Conservation Plan, especially on the Cedar River, are also high priorities in King County's 2006 Flood Hazard Management Plan.

The panel's report recognizes that dynamic approaches to floodplain management involve increased uncertainty of how the river will respond and may result in increased hazards in some river segments for recreational users. It is critical that King County recognizes this risk, plans for appropriate ways to avoid and reduce potential hazards, and effectively communicates these matters to the public. We are confident that with adequate care and planning, King County's beautiful rivers can remain safe and accessible for people and fish.

The WRIA 8 Salmon Recovery Council looks forward to hearing how King County will address the panel's recommendations for procedural reforms, risk reduction, more basin-wide river management and planning, earlier stakeholder involvement and increased public outreach. Where appropriate, WRIA 8 would like to engage with you as a stakeholder and a partner as King County works to implement the panel's recommendations. We have already made it a priority for the WRIA 8 team to assist King County in its outreach regarding Cedar River floodplain restoration projects. We have a strong vested interest in increasing public understanding and support for Cedar River restoration, as well as in representing

salmon recovery interests in the basin. Please contact Jean White, WRIA 8 Coordinator, if you have any questions or suggestions for how WRIA 8 can assist King County in this complex, but critically important work of river and floodplain restoration. We look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

Dr. Don Davidson
Councilmember, City of Bellevue
Chair, WRIA 8 Salmon Recovery Council