

WATER RESOURCE INVENTORY AREA (WRIA 8) SALMON RECOVERY COUNCIL



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Clyde Hill
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Cedar River Council
Friends of the Cedar River Watershed
Friends of the Issaquah Salmon Hatchery
Greater Seattle Chamber of Commerce
Long Live the Kings
Mid-Sound Fisheries Enhancement Group
Mountains to Sound Greenway
Northwest Marine Trade Association
Sno-King Watershed Council
Trout Unlimited
Water Tenders

Alderwood Water and Wastewater District
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
US Army Corps of Engineers
Washington Departments:
Ecology
Fish and Wildlife
Natural Resources
Washington Association of Sewer and Water Districts
King Conservation District

August 13, 2015

The Honorable Edward B. Murray
Mayor
City of Seattle
PO Box 94749
Seattle, WA 98124-4749



RE: Effect of high stream temperatures on salmon migration and survival

Dear Mayor Murray:

On behalf of the Lake Washington/Cedar/Sammamish Watershed (WRIA 8) Salmon Recovery Council (Council), I want to thank you for Seattle's ongoing support for and leadership in our watershed's salmon recovery efforts. The Council is a partnership of 28 local governments, citizens, community groups, state and federal agencies, and businesses working together to implement the *WRIA 8 Chinook Salmon Conservation Plan*. Seattle is an essential partner in our effort to protect and restore salmon habitat and create the conditions that allow for salmon to return to spawn in our local rivers and streams each year and for years to come.

As you know, this year's hot, dry summer has created unprecedented water management challenges. The Council commends Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) for activating its Water Shortage Contingency Plan. Given ongoing concern over high water temperatures and the implications of high temperatures for salmon, *the Council supports SPU's decision to move quickly from the Advisory phase of the plan to Voluntary, and should conditions worsen, to enact Mandatory conservation measures.*

Seattle Public Utilities' water management and conservation efforts are essential to maintaining water quality conditions needed to support healthy salmon populations in the Cedar River. The Cedar River provides some of the highest priority spawning and rearing habitat in our watershed for Chinook salmon listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act, as well as the largest population of sockeye salmon in the contiguous United States. WRIA 8 and its partners, including Seattle, have worked for nearly two decades to protect and restore salmon habitat in our watershed. Much work has been accomplished, but water temperatures this summer threaten the ability of salmon to successfully access their spawning habitat.

Sustained water temperatures above 20°C (68°F) can be stressful to juvenile salmon, increase disease and predation, and pose a thermal barrier to adult salmon migrating to upstream spawning grounds. Water temperatures above 23°C (73°F) can be lethal. For much of July and early August, maximum daily temperatures in the Cedar River were between 20-23°C. As of August 4, only 32,757 sockeye salmon had passed through the Ballard Locks and entered the Lake Washington system, (the preseason forecast was 164,595). Chinook salmon are beginning their return to local rivers, with preseason forecasts of only 3,400.

Honorable Mayor Murray

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We are fortunate that SPU's operation of the Masonry Dam and Landsburg Diversion Dam provide for higher summer flows in the Cedar River than would occur naturally, due to water stored behind the dam. Temperatures in the Cedar are moderated by SPU's ability to adjust reservoir releases. While flows in the Cedar River are currently being maintained at the normal minimum flow required by the Cedar River Habitat Conservation Plan, the possibility of continued hot and dry weather makes it *imperative that we take every precaution to conserve water now in order to ensure flows can be optimized when salmon begin to spawn in September*. According to SPU's Water Shortage Contingency Plan (Appendix C), the Advisory phase is only expected to result in water savings of less than 1%, and moving to Voluntary measures could result in a 5-10% water savings.

Seattle is a leader in water conservation and management, and the Council appreciates SPU's efforts as a key partner in salmon recovery in our watershed. We look forward to continuing this strong partnership to achieve our mutual interest in protecting and restoring habitat for imperiled salmon and maintaining a healthy watershed for all residents.

The Council recognizes there are many challenges and interests involved in managing water, especially during dry years like the one we are experiencing. We appreciate SPU's continued attention to the needs of endangered salmon in water management decisions. Given current conditions and the prospects for continued dry weather, the Council strongly supports the move to the Voluntary phase of SPU's Water Shortage Contingency Plan. We also urge you to broadly communicate water conservation messages to partners and the public, including a conservation goal to communicate how much water should be saved.

If you have any questions about WRIA 8 salmon recovery priorities, please contact Jason Mulvihill-Kuntz, the Lake Washington/Cedar/Sammamish Watershed Coordinator at 206-477-4780 or jason.mulvihill-kuntz@kingcounty.gov. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Larry Phillips". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Larry Phillips
Chair, WRIA 8 Salmon Recovery Council
Chair, Metropolitan King County Council

Cc: Ray Hoffman, Director, Seattle Public Utilities
Martha Neuman, Seattle Public Utilities
Paul Faulds, Seattle Public Utilities
Lake Washington/Cedar/Sammamish Watershed (WRIA 8) Salmon Recovery Council members