



SNOHOMISH BASIN SALMON RECOVERY FORUM

6/3/21

Via Electronic Submission

Mary Verner
Water Resources Program manager
Department of Ecology
PO Box 47600 Olympia, WA 98504-7600

Re: Snohomish Watershed Restoration and Enhancement Plan Approval

Dear Ms. Werner,

The Snohomish Basin Salmon Recovery Forum (Snohomish Forum) is generally supportive of the Watershed Restoration and Enhancement Plan for Water Resource Inventory Area (WRIA) 7. As an *ex-officio* member of the Water Restoration and Enhancement Committee (WREC) for WRIA 7, we valued the many challenging discussions about streamflow restoration that were facilitated through the WREC process. These discussions were both timely and critical for the long-term protection and restoration of the hydrologic processes that support salmon in the Snohomish Basin.

While the WRIA 7 Final Draft Watershed Restoration and Enhancement Plan (WRE Plan) is an important step towards offsetting water used by new permit-exempt wells and providing net ecological benefits, the implementation of the WRE Plan is unlikely to be successful unless several key deficiencies are addressed. Specifically, we recommend attention to the following in the WRE Plan implementation:

- **Fund science-based adaptive management monitoring programs for water offset and habitat projects in this program.** We recommend funding dedicated Ecology staff to develop and implement a project tracking plan as a top priority addition to the WRE Plan.
- **Increase available funding for projects and policy implementation.** At current funding levels, only a small proportion of eligible projects will be funded statewide over the 20-year planning timeframe. We recommend increasing the overall funding allocation for the streamflow restoration program. We also recommend funding Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology) staff to work with the legislature on statewide water policies related to permit-exempt wells.
- **Work to create statewide policies that protect streamflow throughout the state.** We recommend taking the following statewide actions: upgrade the tracking database for permit-exempt wells; encourage connections to public water sources; initiate permit-exempt well metering; deliver water conservation education in non-urban areas; and implement mandatory water conservation measure for permit-exempt well users during statewide drought events. If additional enforcement capacity is needed to effectively implement those actions, we also recommend funding staff pertinent to those programs.
- **Include salmon recovery experts in the Streamflow Restoration Competitive Grant review process.**

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in developing a plan to protect and restore the hydrologic and aquatic health of the Snohomish Basin through the WREC process. The Snohomish Forum commends Ecology staff who navigated and facilitated numerous challenging discussions, especially during the challenges of the pandemic and mandatory virtual meetings.

The Snohomish Forum looks forward to future collaboration with Ecology and extends our gratitude for the valuable work you do.

Sincerely,

Signature

Ryan Miller
Chair, Snohomish Basin Salmon Recovery Forum

cc: Snohomish Basin Salmon Recovery Forum Members
Gretchen Glaub, Lead Entity Coordinator, Snohomish Basin

DRAFT