



Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe

ʔəʔtɬˈwə nəxˈsʌy' əm "The Strong People"

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July 9, 2012

Ann Wessel
Instream Flow Rule Lead
Department of Ecology
1440 10th Street, Suite 102
Bellingham, WA 98225

Re: Comments on the Dungeness Instream Flow Rule for east WRIA 18

Dear Ann,

In 1967 the State of Washington passed the Minimum Water Flows and Levels Act to address the need to protect instream flows for anadromous fish, wildlife, and recreational uses. This legislation was based on the recognition that increasing population pressures associated with rapid development have adverse impacts on water availability for human consumption, salmon habitat requirements, and other uses. In 1998 the state passed Watershed Planning legislation (ESHB 2514) as a means of addressing water management planning on a local level. Two watershed planning units were established for Clallam County, the Dungeness River Management Team (DRMT) and the Elwha-Morse Watershed Management Team (EMMT), to develop recommendations for managing water resources that address quantity, quality, instream flows, and fisheries habitat. The Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe has participated in Watershed Planning in Water Resources Inventory Area (WRIA) 18 (EMMT) for over 12 years. This effort culminated in the Elwha-Dungeness Watershed Plan in 2005.

We cannot continue the misguided approaches and policies of seeking water resources from distant watersheds to satisfy the water resource needs of rapidly growing populations. The preferred strategies for sustainable management of water resources must involve water conservation, minimization of exempt wells, and sensible water allocations during periods of low flows that minimize impacts to fisheries resources.

The Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe applauds the tireless efforts of the Department of Ecology in working with members of the public during the instream flow rule making process and developing a plan that is appropriate and site specific to the needs of the Dungeness watershed. We support this plan which will help to ensure sensible and sustainable water resource management that balances the needs of people with that of fisheries habitat requirements during periods when water is most limited. Thank you for your time and effort in the culmination of this multi-year local planning effort.

Sincerely,

Doug Morrill
Natural Resources Director

Matthew Beirne
Environmental Coordinator