

May 31, 2005

Mr. Don Hamerquist
Clallam Bay Streamkeepers
200 Fernandez Rd.
Clallam Bay, WA 98326

Dear Mr. Hamerquist:

Thank you for your public comment email received on December 19, 2004, regarding Washington State's Water Quality Assessment for 2002/2004. The department received over 45 comment letters during this last review process and is appreciative of the time you took to review and comment on this assessment. We realize that there is an extensive amount of information in the Water Quality Assessment. The scrutiny given by you and other public reviewers has resulted in many changes and corrections that improved the accurateness of the final submittal to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

The Water Quality Assessment is being submitted to EPA as an "integrated report" to meet the Clean Water Act requirements of sections 305(b) and 303(d). EPA will only take approval action on Category 5 of the assessment, which represents the state's 303(d) list. The Water Quality Assessment can be viewed at <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/303d/index.html>.

While I am not entirely sure of the intent of your comments regarding the consignment of benthic data from Clallam County Streamkeepers to the bureaucratic dustbins of Ecology, I did think it was important to explain the purpose of the Washington's Water Quality Assessment. As you may be alluding to, it is a broader statewide effort to pull together water quality data and information on all water bodies in the state where we have information in order to identify problems that need further study or work to improve water quality. The resulting lists help to trigger efforts, especially where it was not previously recognized that problems existed.

This statewide information gathering process does not, and should not, replace local grassroots efforts such as yours to improve the watersheds you live in. Ecology has staff available to assist in watershed efforts, and where permitting or enforcement is needed, we can take regulatory action to protect or improve water quality. The efforts that the Clallam County Streamkeepers have put into BIBI benthic surveys are providing valuable information with regard to the health of the waters in your area. We recognized these efforts and worked with Streamkeepers to accept the data as part of this statewide survey.

Thank you again for taking the time to provide comments to Ecology. If you have questions regarding the above responses, or would like further clarification, please feel free to call me at 360-407-6414.

Sincerely,



Susan Braley
Unit Supervisor
Watershed Management Section