

May 31, 2005

Mr. Michael McHenry
Fisheries Habitat Manager
Elwha Fisheries Office
51 Hathery Road
Port Angeles, WA 98363

Dear Mr. McHenry:

Thank you for your public comment letter received on December 22, 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>.

You requested that we immediately upgrade Port Angeles Harbor to a Class AA water. Any proposed upgrade of waters would need to be analyzed, and require a change to the water quality standards rule. We should also note that Class A waters are considered "excellent", and we believe have adequately stringent standards to meet or exceed protection of all uses. If you do have specific data that you believe merits consideration for Class AA protection, please provide it to us and we will consider it in future rule-makings.

With regard to the dissolved oxygen listing in Port Angeles Harbor (listing ID #10312), we had received earlier comments and data suggesting the low levels were a natural condition. After receiving your comments, however, we asked staff experts in our Environmental Assessment Program to review this listing in light of your additional information. Upon review, we have determined that this listing should remain on Category 5 as an impaired water.

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We appreciate your review of this listing. 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susan Braley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Susan Braley

Unit Supervisor

Watershed Management Section