



State of Washington
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

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STATEMENT OF SUPPORT FOR PROPOSED RULES FOR INSTREAM FLOWS IN
WATER RESOURCE INVENTORY AREA 17 (Quilcene-Snow)

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife supports the proposed instream flow rules for the Quilcene River, Snow Creek, and other streams in Water Resources Inventory Area (WRIA) 17. These instream flows, if enforced, will contribute to the protection and perpetuation of the fish of the northeast corner of the Olympic Peninsula and the wildlife that depend on them. Instream flows are necessary, but not sufficient by themselves, conditions for continued survival and recovery of fish populations in these streams.

The Department of Fish and Wildlife has a considerable interest in WRIA 17. In addition to its statewide responsibilities to “preserve, protect, perpetuate, and manage the wildlife and food fish, game fish, and shellfish in state waters” (RCW 77.04.012), including protection of habitat, the department has operated the Snow Creek Research Station for over three decades; research conducted there by Thom Johnson and colleagues has contributed greatly to the department’s knowledge of steelhead and salmon and to its statewide salmon and steelhead management. Several salmon and steelhead stocks in WRIA 17 are listed under the federal Endangered Species Act and the department is committed to protection and restoration of those stocks; protecting instream flows is essential to recovery of these stocks. The department contributed considerable effort to determining what instream flows would be protective.

The people and local governments that developed the watershed management plan for WRIA 17 are to be commended for developing the foundation for setting and protecting instream flows. Water is essential to people as well as to fish and wildlife. The proposed rules protect, but do not enhance nor restore instream flows. The Department of Fish and Wildlife does not expect the flows to increase, and we fully recognize that existing water rights will not be affected by the proposed rules. The Department of Fish and Wildlife supports the proposed instream flow rules.

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