



Lake Washington/Cedar/Sammamish (WRIA 8) Watershed

201 S. Jackson Street, Suite 600
Seattle, WA 98104-3855

February 26, 2015

Re: Significance of Wayne Public Golf Course to Chinook Salmon Recovery

To Whom It May Concern:

As the Watershed Coordinator for the Lake Washington/Cedar/Sammamish Watershed (WRIA 8), I am writing to convey the significance and value of the Wayne Public Golf Course to local and regional salmon recovery efforts. The WRIA 8 partnership is comprised of 28 local governments, citizens, community groups, state and federal agencies, and business working together to implement the *WRIA 8 Chinook Salmon Conservation Plan* (WRIA 8 Plan). Our work is part of the regional recovery effort for Puget Sound Chinook salmon, which were listed as threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) in 1999.

The WRIA 8 Plan, as a chapter of the *Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Plan*, provides the roadmap for salmon recovery in WRIA 8. The Sammamish River's primary importance is as a migratory corridor for adult and juvenile salmon as they return to the watershed to spawn and leave as juveniles to grow in the ocean. The WRIA 8 Plan identifies habitat restoration along the Sammamish River as critical to restoring Chinook to the North Lake Washington basin. In addition to Chinook, the Sammamish River is also used by coho, sockeye, and kokanee salmon.

The Wayne Public Golf Course, located at 96th Avenue NE in the City of Bothell, extends along both the left and right banks of the Sammamish River. In total, the property has over 4,500 linear feet of river frontage and contains a small tributary stream draining to the Sammamish on the left bank. This site offers a unique opportunity to protect a large undeveloped space in a primarily urban area, and protection would set the stage for potentially noteworthy habitat restoration work benefitting ESA-listed Chinook salmon and other fish and wildlife.

Through past modifications, salmon habitat along the Sammamish River is highly degraded. In addition to limitations in physical habitat, water temperatures in the Sammamish during the time of adult salmon upstream migration can reach lethal levels. To create and maintain habitat conditions capable of supporting viable populations of Chinook salmon, the WRIA 8 Plan outlines restoration priorities for the Sammamish River focused on improving conditions for both juveniles and adults. Recommendations include reconnecting the river to its floodplain by removing or setting back levees, restoring historic side channels and tributary stream connections, controlling invasive vegetation and reforesting the riparian corridor, and improving water quality (especially temperature).

Protection of the Wayne Golf Course is consistent with the objectives of the WRIA 8 Plan, and having the property under public ownership could enable the types of restoration activities recommended in the WRIA 8 Plan. Our understanding of the habitat needs of salmon suggests large-scale projects are necessary to recover healthy, sustainable Chinook populations. The Wayne Golf Course site offers the potential for regionally-significant restoration due to the size of the property and its location along a key Chinook migration corridor. Additionally, local salmon recovery funding alone is not sufficient to acquire properties of this size.

Protection of the Wayne Golf Course would contribute significantly to WRIA 8 and Puget Sound salmon and ecosystem recovery objectives, and we support efforts to acquire this property where habitat protection and restoration are the primary objectives. Should you have questions, please contact me at jason.mulvihill-kuntz@kingcounty.gov or 206-477-4780.

Sincerely,



Jason Mulvihill-Kuntz

Watershed Coordinator, Lake Washington/Cedar/Sammamish Watershed (WRIA 8)