

6 October 1978

MEMO FOR: RECORD

SUBJECT: Skagit River Levee Project - Environmental Coordination

1. Purpose. On 3 October 1978, Karen Mettling, ERS, visited the Washington Department of Game (WDG) in Mt. Vernon; the Washington Department of Fisheries (WDF) in Burlington; and the Skagit System Cooperative (SSC) in LaConner to present the status of the Skagit Levee Project and to deliver orthophotos of the project indicating the locations of riprap and quarry spall and sod, as promised at the 29 August agency workshop.

2. Agency Contacts. The following agency representatives were contacted:

Art Stendal	Washington Department of Game
Larry Brewer	" " "
John Garrett	" " "
Russ Orrell	Washington Department of Fisheries
Steve Fransen	Skagit System Cooperative

Coordination of the project status had already been accomplished with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) on 25 September 1978 when Ms. Mettling met with Bob Wunderlich, FWS, to discuss the content of the Fish and Wildlife Report. The orthophotos were delivered to Mr. Wunderlich on 27 September 1978 following an aerial surveillance of the project area.

Copies of the orthophotos will also be presented to the Washington Department of Natural Resources and the National Marine Fisheries Service which were represented at the 29 August agency workshop.

3. General Discussion. The agencies are pleased with the reduction in the amount of riprap from that shown them on 29 August and with the removal from the project of any plans for channel improvements. It is noted that in several locations where riprap is to be placed, riprap exists under current conditions; therefore, one could expect the impacts of additional placement to be less than in areas where riprap currently is not present.

Concern is being expressed by WDG for the impact of the improved downstream levees on the diking system of the Skagit Wildlife Recreation Area. Both WDG and WDF are concerned with the removal of riparian habitat and adverse impacts to fish and wildlife.

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3. Fisher Slough. Fish usage of this slough was specifically discussed with WDG, WDF, and SSC on 3 October. All indicated that this is a prime cutthroat fishing area with spawning occurring both in Fisher and Carpenter Creek Drainages. WDG supplements natural runs with stocking in Carpenter Creek. Where the mouth of Fisher Slough empties into Tom Moore Slough on the South Fork of the Skagit River, cutthroat fishing is particularly notable. Coho also utilize Fisher Slough as a migratory route and are known to spawn in the Carpenter and Fisher Creek Drainages. Later, during the 3 October trip to Skagit, Ms. Mettling talked with two fishermen who had just caught three cutthroat in Fisher Slough.

In discussing alternatives for the Skagit Project at Fisher Slough with the agencies, the following recommendations have been made:

a. That the project cause the least disturbance to the existing slough alinement. Improvement of the existing dike system only is the preferred alternative.

b. If a. is not possible, construction of a tide gate would be acceptable, but final agency opinion will be reserved until the exact location and structure of such a gate is known. A tide gate currently exists under the road on Fisher Slough. Apparently, immigrating spawners and outmigrating juveniles move through the slough in concert with the opening and closing of the tide gates without serious disruption to their life cycles.

c. Pumping stations have caused concern in the past from WDF. Realizing that with a tide gate, a pumping station would be required, it is necessary that such a station be designed to incur the least damage to migrating fish and coordinated with WDF.

4. Field checks were made of Gages Slough and Britt Slough, as well as Fisher Slough, on 3 October 1978. There is no reported fish utilization of either Gages or Britt Slough. On both there is some recreational (small boat docks) and waterfowl (primarily domestic) usage. Agencies have requested that they be informed of the Gages Slough and Britt Slough levee alinements.

5. Further coordination will continue as necessary. The agencies have been informed of our upcoming public workshop.

cc: Dice  
 Bush/Mettling *FB*  
 Reg Plng (Brooks) *NCM*  
 Des Br (Cook) (Hansen/Jump/Scudder)  
 H&H BR  
 Econ  
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 FPMS  
 ERS RP File (Skagit River Levees)

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