



STATE OF WASHINGTON

DEPARTMENT OF FISHERIES

115 General Administration Building, M.S. AX-11 • Olympia, Washington 98504 • (206) 753-6600 • (SCAN) 234-6600

July 1, 1991 -

Mr. Larry Kunzler  
1420 Fifth Avenue, #3400  
Seattle, Washington 98101-2339

Dear Mr. Kunzler:

Thank you for allowing us to review the draft copy of your book "Skagit River Valley - The Disaster Waiting To Happen". It is obvious this has been a labor of love for you and you have done an excellent job. You have gathered many historical documents from widely scattered sources which will aid in the review of whatever solutions are proposed for Skagit Valley flooding.

The November floods in 1989 and 1990 make it very clear many Skagit County residents live in harms way. People along the Sauk River, in Hamilton, Cape Horn, Thunderbird, Shangri-La, Cockerham Island, and Fir Island know that all too well. Many others in the lower valley who are "protected" by dikes may become complacent that their homes and businesses are safe. However, dike failures at Fir Island are a drastic reminder that being safe may not be possible on the Skagit River floodplain.

Yet, people continue to be allowed to build subdivisions, and shopping malls. Local governments control development, and the decision is clear in their mind that perceived benefits to the local economy outweigh the risks incurred in further building in the floodplain. As you discuss in your book, when, not if, the river breaks through upstream of Burlington, there will be damage which will make that which was suffered in the last two years seem small in comparison.

What is the solution to the Skagit flooding? Are more dams necessary? Is the river below SR 9 filling in with sediment? Should the river be dredged? Should all eroding banks be armored? Should a bypass be built? Should dikes be raised, moved further back, or built further upriver in places where none now exist? Are the flooding problems great enough to warrant major changes or structures? If the public is dissatisfied with how flooding occurs or how the river is managed, then a serious, comprehensive study is required to at least answer the questions raised. The

Mr. Larry Kunzler

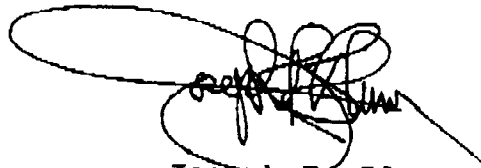
July 1, 1991

Page 2

general reaction to a study is often, "We don't need any more studies, we just need to go do something!" To just go do something will involve potentially wasting tens to hundreds of millions of dollars of public money, potentially making flooding worse for others, and resulting in drastic, unnecessary damage to the public's fisheries resource. Any serious changes in river policy or structure will require an environmental review on the federal, state, and local level. The Washington Department of Fisheries will be deeply involved with this review, and with any subsequent permitting should major structural changes be proposed.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to review your book; your work is appreciated, and useful.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joseph R. Blum", is written over a large, light-colored oval scribble. The signature is somewhat stylized and overlaps the scribble.

Joseph R. Blum  
Director

NSD:KB:dmm