

City of
Bellevue



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October 16, 2000

Honorable Slade Gorton
730 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-4701

Re: City of Bellevue Endangered Species Act Compliance Strategy

Dear Senator Gorton:

I am writing to let you know where the City of Bellevue stands with regard to the ongoing Tri-County ESA discussions. You may have seen news articles that suggest we are pulling out of the Tri-County or have rejected Tri-County plans: neither is true. In brief, here is where we are:


- On September 25, 2000, the City Council adopted an initial Endangered Species Act (ESA) compliance strategy. This strategy commits the City to continuing participation in regional Watershed Planning efforts. We expect to join as parties to a proposed interlocal agreement with jurisdictions in our watershed, and via that agreement, fund a collaborative planning effort to identify priority projects to assist endangered species.
- Our compliance strategy also keeps us at the table with the Tri-County as it continues to refine the various "planks" of a salmon recovery 4(d) proposal. As detailed on the enclosed summary matrix, the City believes we currently meet or exceed some of the draft "planks," but it is most prudent to adopt a "wait-and-see" approach to certain planks, particularly land-use. Given the uncertainty surrounding the details of the Tri-County 4(d) proposal and required funding commitments, Bellevue has chosen not to adopt the full "proposal" at this time.
- Our biennial budget for 2001-2002 will, I fully expect, incorporate funding to carry forward these planning efforts, and enable us to continue to fund local investments in key habitat protection.

This strategy combines a regional focus on watershed-based salmon recovery planning with Bellevue's continued implementation of significant investments within the City for salmon habitat preservation and restoration. It also gives the City needed flexibility to phase in programs over time as appropriate for the City's physical environment. Third, the strategy allows the City to develop a coordinated salmon/water resource strategy as other initiatives and mandates are evaluated, such as the new state stormwater and shoreline regulations, and Clean Water Act NPDES Phase II requirements. Finally, it will enable the City to evaluate funding needs identified in the watershed planning efforts.

The City of Bellevue is committed to continuing its legacy of environmental protection. That legacy includes the establishment of one of the first stormwater utilities in the nation (1974), the acquisition of sensitive areas and open space, and the adoption of regulations to protect over 60 miles of streams and 800 acres of wetlands.

As you know, the Chinook salmon listing in the Puget Sound area is the first of its kind in a major urban area, and there are no models to follow to ensure that salmon recovery occurs. I must convey our continuing hope that National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) be as specific as possible in outlining what is necessary for 4(d) rule protection. In closing, I would point to the challenges faced by cities and counties attempting to simultaneously address multiple, often conflicting, state and federal mandates at the same time as we seek to address ESA. Anything that can be done to bring to ESA discussions an acknowledgement and attempt to balance these conflicting mandates would be extremely helpful. Bellevue remains committed to participating in the Tri-County effort and regional watershed planning.

Sincerely,



Chuck Mosher
Mayor

Cc: City Council
Honorable Ron Sims
Honorable Doug Sutherland
Honorable Bob Drewel
Honorable Paul Schell
Honorable Brian Ebersole
Honorable Ed Hansen