

May 29, 2009

Mr. Phil Anderson
Acting Director
Washington State Department of Fish & Wildlife
600 Capital Way North
Olympia, WA 98501



cc: WDFW Commissioners, Governor Christine Gregoire,
Senators Maria Cantwell and Patty Murray,
Congressmen Norm Dicks, Jay Inslee and Brian Baird

RE: Proposed Rules to Establish a Series of Wild Salmonid Management Areas

Dear Mr. Anderson:

We the undersigned are, collectively, members of the Steelhead Summit Alliance. The SSA is comprised of individuals and organizations working cooperatively to try to save the wild steelhead populations of the Pacific Northwest from extinction.

As you know, five of seven steelhead populations in Washington State are ESA listed as either threatened or endangered and the rest are in serious decline. Early river closures for steelhead fishing because of low numbers of steelhead in our rivers are now a fact of life in this state and we are reaching a "tipping point" where we will not be able to save these precious fish.

In this regard, we are proposing the adoption, through the upcoming "major" rules cycle, of a series of rules designed to establish Wild Salmonid Management Areas on several rivers and streams throughout the state. This concept has been widely discussed over the past several years and been endorsed in one form or another by every major scientific and conservation group engaged in the study of steelhead in Washington State, including your own Department. It is time to implement it.

The rule proposals incorporated here do not propose radical change. In fact, the vast majority of river/stream reaches included already operate, in whole or in part, under these rules -- except for the outplanting of hatchery fish which is inconsistent with the concept of Wild Salmonid Management Areas and which would be eliminated under the proposed rules. Rather, we are looking for consistency and clarity -- the recognition that Wild Salmonid Management Areas are to be managed on an ecosystem basis for the protection and propagation of wild fish.

We ask you to adopt this proposal in its entirety and welcome any questions or comments you or your staff may have for us.

Sincerely,

Rich Simms, President
Wild Steelhead Coalition

Bill McMillan, President
Wild Fish Conservancy

Kurt Beardslee, Executive Director
Wild Fish Conservancy

Mark Taylor, WA Council President
Trout Unlimited

Bill Redman, Chair
Steelhead Committee
Federation of Fly Fishers