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From: [Devin Smith](#)

To: smadsen@cob.org

Cc: cfogelsong@cob.org

Sent: Friday, March 23, 2007 7:10 PM

Subject: Whitewater recreation on Whatcom Creek and MF Nooksack

Hi Sue,

I'm writing on behalf of the local whitewater boating community regarding Whatcom Creek and the Middle Fork Nooksack River. I have informally asked you some questions about City of Bellingham activities related to these two whitewater streams, and you suggested I contact the city officially for more information. So I have compiled a short description of the recreational interest and a number relevant questions. I am hoping we can get a better understanding of city activities as they relate to whitewater recreation and start a discussion with the city about our unique interests.

Whatcom Creek

Boaters are interested in paddling sections of Whatcom Creek but have heard that it may not be allowed by the city, even though we are not aware of any signs or public information to that effect. Boaters would also like to know more about projects the city has done in the creek following the pipeline disaster and possible future projects. Log jams placed in the creek may serve a valuable purpose that should be maintained, but can sometimes create safety hazards and make passage along the creek more difficult when they span the entire channel. The primary whitewater sections are between the lake and the crossing under Woburn street and also the falls in the vicinity of the hatchery near the mouth of the creek. But the entire creek from Lake Whatcom to the Bay is of interest to at least some boaters. Here are some specific questions:

1) Is it legal for boaters to paddle on Whatcom Creek and if not, what are the reasons and is it just for selected reaches or is it the entire creek?

2) If it is not legal, then we would like to know what the regulatory authority is (is there something in writing or law?) and who at the city we could direct comments to regarding the closure.

3) If it is legal, are there specific concerns the city would like recreational boaters to consider in order to be responsible users?

4) What is the purpose of log placement, and in what reaches has the city done those or has a current key interest in? In particular, log jams upstream of Pixie falls (the falls closest to Woburn, which I think the city calls "middle falls") are a concern for boaters and it does not seem like they would be used by migratory salmon, which is a common purpose for these kinds of structures. Also, logs immediately downstream from the falls are a concern, although it is not clear whether these are natural or constructed by the city. I would be more than happy to meet with the city to discuss specific project sites.

5) Does the city have plans to place more log structures, and if so, how can boaters provide comments on designs for those structures? Depending on their purpose, we are curious whether channel spanning jams are necessary, or whether slight accommodations could be made to allow for boater passage. Very little would be needed as boaters should be skilled to paddle on Whatcom Creek. And there are certainly large amounts of natural logs present in the channel which boaters should be expected to navigate.

6) We have heard that the city takes flow measurements on the creek and would be interested in seeing this information made available real time on the internet.

Middle Fork

Boaters regularly paddle many sections on the Middle Fork Nooksack River in the vicinity of the city's diversion dam. Popular sections include the lower two miles of Clearwater creek, the Middle Fork from Clearwater Creek to the diversion dam, and the Middle Fork Canyon, from the diversion dam downstream to the bridge. Providing fish passage at the project site seems like a great idea which many boaters support. We are interested in what the city's plans are for modification to the dam, how that may affect access, flow, and channel conditions for paddlers in the vicinity of the current dam. Specific questions include:

- 1) What are the city's current plans for the Middle Fork diversion dam and what is the likely timeframe for construction?
- 2) What potential affects will the plan have on access both during construction and then after completed? If it is too early to know, then we would like to find out how we can best get information as the plans proceed.
- 3) Is there a possibility that recreational access could be improved -- or at least not made more difficult -- as part of the project? Currently boaters park outside the gate, walk down to the river, across the bridge and scramble over penstocks to a small eddy downstream from the dam.
- 4) Will there be any changes to flow conditions or the existing physical features in the channel as a result of the new project?
- 5) Will there be opportunities for public comment?

Thanks very much for considering these questions. I look forward to communicating more closely with the city so we can be clear about what activities are allowed and so that we can educate the city about our unique recreational interest so that it may be considered in future projects. Please call or email me to discuss these questions further.

Thanks!

Devin Smith

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