



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie
National Forest
Mt. Baker Ranger District

810 State Route 20
Sedro-Woolley, WA 98284
(360) 856-5700

File Code: 2350

Date: August 8, 2006

Devin Smith
1228 Yew St.
Bellingham, WA 98229

Dear Devin

Last summer you contacted our office expressing concern about how the Forest Service managed boating access on the North Fork Nooksack River during the spawning season for Spring Run Puget Sound Chinook Salmon. From 2000 to 2004, the Forest Service closed river access to boater, rafters and kayakers from mid-August through March of the following year. The closure was designed to protect federally listed threatened Chinook Salmon during their spawning season and to protect their redds until fry emergence in March. Following feedback from recreational river users, we met with representatives of American Whitewater (AW) and the Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association (NSEA) and agreed to continue closing the river to boat access in mid-August but to lift the closure on October 15. The rationale for the change was that boaters would have limited impact to established redds because they seldom leave their boats in this stretch of the river. AW and NSEA, agreed to working cooperatively with the Forest Service to develop and implement salmon and river education messages to be distributed to the boating community by way of signing and the Internet.

For 2006, we are working collaboratively with AW and NSEA to implement the strategy developed in 2005. We are instituting a voluntary closure during this year's spawning season for the Horseshoe Bend and Glacier Gorge sections of the North Fork Nooksack River from August 15 through October 15. We are asking all recreational users of the river to refrain from entering the river in areas where salmon are present. This includes swimming, wading, fishing and paddling. We are asking boaters to launch only when flows at the Glacier gauge exceed 1000 cfs. We are also requesting that if you do use the river, please register at the registration box. This will help us evaluate the effectiveness of the voluntary restriction and how we manage conditions in the future. (See attached poster)

We thank you for your interest in management of recreational boating activities on the North Fork Nooksack River as they affect the listed Puget Sound Chinook Salmon. If you have questions please contact Scott Lentz, Fisheries Biologist at slentz@fs.fed.us or 360-856-5700-x207.

JON VANDERHEYDEN
District Ranger



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810 State Route 20
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File Code: 2720

Date: August 18, 2006

Devin Smith
3060 Peabody St
Bellingham WA 98225

Dear Devin

Considering the response received from last week's letter regarding the voluntary boating closure of the North Fork Nooksack, it is clear that the letter did not necessarily accurately represent what we have been collectively working toward. To clarify, the Horseshoe Bend section will remain open to boating regardless of flow. The gradient of that section exceeds what is commonly used by spawning Chinook salmon. Therefore, we do not anticipate any adverse effects on Chinook by permitting boating in this section. Please use the marked put-in just downstream of the lower gradient side channel and take-out at the Horseshoe Bend trailhead adjacent to the SR542 Bridge. Please help us by using the register box at Horseshoe

Otherwise, we are asking boaters to observe a voluntary closure of the North Fork Nooksack River below Nooksack Falls. We are asking people to refrain from boating unless flows exceed 1000 cfs between August 15 and October 15. Thereafter, we ask boaters to avoid contacting areas of cleared gravel that may hold salmon redds. Eggs hatch sometime in March; the hatch being conditioned on environmental factors such as water temperature and flow.

We thank you for your interest in management of recreational boating activities on the North Fork Nooksack River as they affect the listed Puget Sound Chinook Salmon. If you have questions please contact Scott Lentz, Fisheries Biologist at slentz@fs.fed.us or 360-856-5700-x207.

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