

Project 31006 – Protect Wood’s Landing Chum Spawning Site
Response to ISRP review
(Updated by Vicky Ridge-Cooney, Mar 15, 2002)

“What are the effects of fluctuations of flow caused the operation of Bonneville dam on the spawning habitat in question? Will the area stay watered?”

The water level at the site is determined by rainfall and snowmelt, operation of Bonneville Dam and the tidal cycle. An analysis of river stage data from the I-5 bridge in Vancouver from 1983-2002 shows that the low flows occur in late July through October. The chum are present from November through late April.

Because the chum spawn in the seeps, even if the site were above river level redds would not be dewatered. Surveys indicate that even in low flow years chum spawn and rear successfully at the site. Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) surveys documented chum spawning in the fall of 1999, 2000, and 2001. In 2001, a very low flow year, WDFW estimated that 1000 fish spawned. Although data analysis is not yet complete, seining in the spring of 2002 is determining that juveniles were produced at the site.

Information is not available to definitively answer the question of the impacts of the operation of Bonneville Dam on the site. When the site is acquired, research and monitoring at the site will allow comparison of conditions there to operation of the dam factoring in season and tidal cycle.

Additional spawning area would be provided in Joseph’s Creek even when Columbia River flows are low. The creek area, about 350 feet long and 5 feet wide, with habitat restoration would provide spawning and rearing habitat for about 50 pairs of chum in addition to the mainstem area habitat.

“What is known about historical use of this area by chum?”

Anecdotal evidence from the Wood family ancestors, who homesteaded the site, indicates that chum spawned there long before the official surveys in 1999.

In 2000, the first year of an intensive survey, the peak count of live fish was 51 and the estimated number of fish spawning was 140 based on the Area Under the Curve Method. In 2001 the peak count was 333 live fish. Using the same ratio of number of live fish counted to number of fish spawning, the estimate for 2001 would be up to 1000 fish spawning.

“How many redds per year are counted there?”

Surveyors count redds early in the spawning season when the individual redds are distinguishable. However, when abundance increases, new redds are hard to identify and

count. Mass spawning occurs at Wood's Landing. Live fish counts instead of redd counts are used to estimate the spawning population size.

“Are fish holding there or spawning?”

The chum spawn and rear at the site. In-person observations, video taping and photos have documented chum actively spawning. Redds and spawned out carcasses have also been documented at the site. Seining at the site this spring captured recently emerged juvenile chum.

“What is the responsibility of the Fish and Wildlife Program to address problems that may be solvable with municipal zoning tools?”

The problems of the development threats are not solvable with municipal zoning tools. The properties are in private ownership. A municipality can not zone such property as open space or conservation lands because such zoning would preclude the development of the property by the owner. The United States Supreme Court has ruled that such actions are “takings” of property rights by the government. The only method to avoid new development in such areas is the acquisition of easements or fee simple titles.

“The proposal would spend \$860,000k for 12 acres, over \$63k per acre. Is it correct that the agreement would allow buildings to remain or be built on 7.2 acres of the 11.8 acres?”

Two parcels have one existing house each, less than 2000 square feet per house. The easements would allow the buildings to remain, but the footprints and the impervious surfaces could not be increased. On a third parcel the easement would allow the construction of one 1000 square foot cottage, but no additional impervious surfaces. The coverage would be a small percent of the 12 acres.

“Why would payment of taxes be included in this project – wouldn't owners pay the taxes with the purchase money?”

The taxes in the budget are exise taxes associated with the acquisition, not property taxes, and therefore are included in the project.