



State of Washington

Department of Fish and Wildlife

South Central Region – Yakima Regional Office: 1701 So. 24th Avenue, Yakima, WA 98902

Phone: (509) 575-2740, Fax (509) 575-2474

May 22, 2012

Kim Sellers, ALEA Grant Manager
Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO)
1111 Washington Street SE
PO Box 40917
Olympia, WA 98504-0917

Dear Ms. Sellers:

RE: Support for the Port of Kennewick's Effort to Further Convert Barren Shoreline into Productive Habitat

The Port of Kennewick Administration demonstrates a newer vision for Clover Island as one that has substantial harmony with the river environment. A quite notable first step in reclaiming historic characteristics that the pre-reservoir Clover Island once provided to fish and wildlife is their recent conversion of what was largely 600 feet of concrete-paved river shore along the Island's west causeway into a complex, living shoreline that now emulates those found along the undeveloped Hanford Reach. And it likely was by no small amount of planning, coordination, and salesmanship on their part that the outcome strongly reflected the suggestions and prescriptions by fish and wildlife biologists of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, NOAA-Fisheries, and the Department of Fish and Wildlife.

An extensive system of Columbia River levees throughout the Tri-cities drastically reduces native-fish and wildlife habitats. A loss of refuge areas, together with the creation of better habitat for both native and non-native predator species, are prevailing ecosystem deficiencies resulting from those levees. Clover Island, in its man-made form, affords a comparatively beneficial variation of the altered environmental conditions for many native species, because it considerably impounds the swift stream flow and wind. Nutrients, food items, and warmer water already tend to be retained around the Island, just because of its orientation and size. For instance, weeks-old juvenile fall chinook have been known to preferentially aggregate along the west causeway since prior to the recent fish habitat improvements. Washington's greatest remaining fall chinook spawning area is situated just sixteen miles upstream of Clover Island. Within the expanse of levees along the Tri-cities and other habitat losses caused by the post-dam

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inundation of natural bars and islands for ten miles upstream, the Island with its moderated conditions may resemble a bit of a desert oasis to their fragile hatchlings.

The proposed conversion of even more barren shoreline to emulate natural river shore will help to further reduce predation, positively influence feeding conditions (much through increased primary productivity); and that will likely attract and support even larger numbers of the young chinook. For these reasons, the Department of Fish and Wildlife has assigned a much-elevated priority to improving the shoreline of Clover Island for a considerable time. We strongly encourage the Port's ecosystem-based approach to economic development of shorelines to be replicated throughout the Tri-cities reach of the Columbia River.

Please feel free to contact me at 509-457-9310, or WDFW District Fish Biologist, Paul Hoffarth (at 509-545-2284), for additional information relating to our support of the Port of Kennewick's request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Eric Bartrand".

Eric Bartrand
Area Habitat Biologist

EB:eb

Cc: Paul Hoffarth