

**SKOKOMISH RIVER BASIN
MASON COUNTY, WASHINGTON
ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION**

APPENDIX B

PUBLIC SCOPING COMMENTS

**Integrated Feasibility Report and
Environmental Impact Statement**



**US Army Corps
of Engineers®**
Seattle District

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Skokomish General Investigation Study Public Scoping Summary Report

December 2010



US Army Corps
of Engineers ®



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Chapter 1. Introduction

Purpose of Report

The US Army Corps of Engineers (Corps); Mason County; and the Skokomish Indian Tribe, the non-Federal Sponsors; are preparing for the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Skokomish General Investigation (GI) Study in Mason County, Washington. This scoping report describes the public scoping process for the Skokomish General Investigation Study and summarizes the comments received through that process. Included in this report are a brief project history, project purpose, description of alternatives being considered, documents related to the scoping process, and verbatim copies of all comments received.

Project Background

The Skokomish River channel has been filling with sediment for several decades, resulting in frequent flooding and decreasing natural ecosystem structures, functions, and processes necessary to support critical fish and wildlife habitat throughout the Skokomish River Basin. Increased sediment load, reduced flows, and encroachment of the floodplain by man-made structures are leading to continued degradation of natural ecosystem functions and habitat. The degraded riverine and estuarine aquatic habitat has caused a decline in the population of critical fish and wildlife species, including multiple Endangered Species Act (ESA) listed species. Additionally, the channel capacity of the Skokomish River varies significantly. Limited channel capacity causes floodwater to leave the banks at various locations, ultimately causing frequent flooding of local roads, two state highways, agricultural fields, residences, and other structures.

The Skokomish River General Investigation is a basin-wide study; however, numerous constraints limit Corps' involvement to actions primarily in the lower Skokomish River Valley. Problems, opportunities, and objectives will be examined within the context of the entire watershed. Recognizing the relationships between the upper and lower watershed will ensure a comprehensive study overview.

The initial project goals are to:

- Identify impairments to the aquatic ecosystem of the Skokomish River Basin
- Identify flood risk
- Identify and evaluate potential solutions
- Determine federal interest in implementing solutions
- Recommend actions to resolve aquatic ecosystem and flood risk management impairments

Project Purpose

The purpose of the EIS and feasibility study is to evaluate if there is a federal interest in aquatic ecosystem restoration and flood risk management in the Skokomish River Basin.

Study Area

The Skokomish River Basin (Basin) is located in northwest Washington, predominantly in Mason County. The project study area is comprised of the entire drainage basin, including the estuary. The river collects drainage from an approximate 240-square mile drainage basin, and eventually flows into southern Hood Canal, an arm of Puget Sound. The river flows out of three sub-basins (South Fork, North Fork, and Vance Creek) into a broad, flat alluvial plain known as the Skokomish Valley. The Skokomish Indian Reservation is located in the valley along the southeast portion of the Olympic Peninsula. The Basin is defined by the Water Resource Inventory Area (WRIA) 16 and is located within US Congressional District #6 of Washington State. See Appendix A for a map of the study area.

Project Alternatives

The EIS will evaluate build alternatives for aquatic ecosystem restoration and flood risk management as well as a No Action Alternative. Build alternatives that will be evaluated under aquatic ecosystem restoration will include an alternative that uses physical actions to restore the Skokomish basins' habitat-forming processes and/or create habitats that have been lost as a result of historic alterations. Example of actions that could occur under this alternative include: increasing floodplain habitat and connectivity, restoring off-channel habitat for juvenile fish, improving estuarine functions and processes, and increasing emergent and riparian vegetation. Another build alternative that will be considered will focus on benefits to the several listed aquatic species under the Endangered Species Act. Actions under this alternative could include creation of spawning and rearing areas, and additional fish supplementation. The No Action alternative will also be evaluated.

One alternative for flood risk management includes evaluation of the current levee system. Actions under this alternative may include setback levees to improve flood containment. Another alternative would study the effects of sediment removal and actions would include: sediment traps, dredging, and selective gravel removal. Another alternative would focus on nonstructural actions such as flood proofing and education. The No Action alternative will also be evaluated in the EIS.

A range of ecosystem restoration and flood risk management actions will be investigated and more than one option may be included in the Preferred Alternative identified in the EIS. Additionally, a number of potential ecosystem restoration projects could meet ancillary flood risk management goals.

National Environmental Policy Act Requirements for Scoping

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) emphasizes public involvement in government actions affecting the environment by requiring that the benefits and risks associated with the proposed actions be assessed and publicly disclosed. In accordance with NEPA public involvement requirements, opportunities were presented for the public to provide oral or written comments on potentially affected resources, environmental issues to be considered, and the agency's approach to the analysis. Efforts to involve the public in preparing and implementing NEPA procedures included holding and providing public notice of a NEPA-related public scoping meeting, soliciting appropriate information from the

public, and explaining procedures of how interested parties can get information on the NEPA process. A summary of the public involvement activities are provided in the document, including comments received and other underlying documents involved in the public scoping period.

Public Involvement Process

The Corps conducted a public outreach effort as part of scoping, including official notifications, display ads, and the mailing of postcards to the project mailing list, including Skokomish basin landowners.

- A federal **Notice of Intent (NOI)** was published in the Federal Register on September 24, 2010.
- A **postcard** announcing the scoping period and public meeting was:
 - Mailed to residents and stakeholders on the Corps project list and Mason County Assessor property owner data. Postcards were received two weeks prior to the meeting.
 - Mailed to relevant agency and tribal contacts.
- **Print display advertisements** were placed in the following publications approximately three weeks prior to the meeting:
 - Daily Journal of Commerce (9/15/10)
 - Kitsap Sun (9/15/10)
 - Shelton-Mason County Journal (9/16/10)
- A **single point of contact** was provided on all communication materials.
- Outreach materials included **Skokomish Project fact sheet, comment form** and **NEPA fact sheet**.
- The **public scoping meeting** was held at an accessible and central location in the project area.

Notice of Intent

NEPA requires that scoping begin with the publication of a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an environmental impact statement. The NOI for the Skokomish General Investigation Study was published in the Federal Register on September 24, 2010 (see Appendix B). The NOI described the project background, project purpose, project alternatives, public involvement effort, scoping meeting details and environmental review coordination efforts. The NOI also started the scoping period that ended on October 25, 2010. A copy of the NOI is included in Appendix B.

Public Scoping Meeting

A public scoping meeting was held on Thursday, October 7, 2010 within the project area at Mason County Public Works, 100 West Public Works Drive, Shelton, Washington. An open house ran from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., with a presentation and opportunity for formal public comment at 5:30 p.m. The public scoping meeting aimed to provide an overview of the Skokomish General Investigation Study, identify project purpose and need, identify preliminary measures, and describe the NEPA process.

The public scoping meeting was announced through postcards that were mailed to nearly 300 contacts, including Skokomish residents, businesses, agencies and tribes. A copy of the postcard is included in

Appendix C. In addition, display ads were placed in the Daily Journal of Commerce, Kitsap Sun, and Shelton-Mason County Journal several weeks prior to the meeting. A copy of the display ad is included in Appendix D.

US Army Corps of Engineers, Mason County, and Skokomish Indian Tribe staff were available during the open house portion of the public meeting to discuss the project and answer questions. Several handouts were available for meeting attendees including the meeting agenda (Appendix E), fact sheet on the NEPA process (Appendix F), and Skokomish Project fact sheet (Appendix G). Additionally, a comment form for meeting attendees to provide feedback was available and attendees were encouraged to leave their comments at the meeting or send the comment form by mail to the address provided. A copy of the comment form is provided in Appendix H. Approximately 40 people attended the public scoping meeting. The sign-in sheets are included in Appendix I.

Various display boards were presented at the open house, including an outline of the project phases, a map of the Skokomish General Investigation study area, description of problems and opportunities, potential measures or solutions, 2-year and 100-year flood maps, and a 1938 aerial photo of the Lower Skokomish River. Copies of the display boards are included in Appendix J.

The Corps and Mason County gave a 30-minute presentation on the Skokomish General Investigation Study. Larry Scudder with the Corps began the presentation with an overview of the study area, Skokomish River problems, and the purpose of the study. Larry described the potential project outcomes, including reduced flood risk and flood damage, restoration of productive farm and agricultural usage, restoration of Skokomish Basin processes and habitats, and creation of spawning and rearing areas beneficial to resident and endangered species.

Rich Geiger, Mason County, presented information on the preliminary measures. He said a management measure is defined as “either a structural element that requires construction or assembly on-site, or a non-structural activity.” Rich described the potential management measures the project may have including mainstream measures, sediment measures, infrastructure measures, estuary measures, and non-structural measures. Rich acknowledged other ongoing projects in the basin, including the Skokomish Tribe and Forest Service project to improve salmon habitat and changes in Cushman Dam operations.

Pat Cagney with the Corps explained the NEPA process and its requirements. He said the NEPA process evaluates different project alternatives, presents the analyses of potential environmental effects of the proposed actions, and provides opportunities for public comment during scoping the draft EIS and final EIS. Pat emphasized that meeting attendees’ input is valuable and encouraged them to submit comments by the end of the public scoping period, October 25. Contact information for submitting comments was provided in the presentation. The PowerPoint presentation given during the meeting is included in Appendix K.

The public hearing portion of the meeting followed the presentation, with nine attendees testifying or asking questions. A court reporter was available to record verbal comments during the public hearing and the transcript of the hearing is included in Appendix L.

Media Coverage

The public involvement effort for the public scoping period spurred media coverage in the region outside of deliberate notification and advertisement by the project team. Earned media for the Skokomish General Investigation Study included newspaper articles published prior to the NEPA public scoping meeting. Articles appeared in the following publications. Screenshots of the articles are included in Appendix M.

- The Bellingham Herald – *“Study to focus on Skokomish flooding”* (10/06/2010)
- The News Tribune – *“Study to focus on Skokomish flooding”* (10/06/2010)
- The Olympian – *“Study to focus on Skokomish flooding”* (10/06/2010)
- DredgingToday.com – *“Skokomish River needs dredging”* (10/07/2010)

Chapter 2. Public Scoping Comments

Summary of Comment Statistics

The public scoping period for the Skokomish General Investigation Study allowed for the public to submit comments in person, through email or by mail. While comments were solicited and received on all aspects of the project during scoping, the comment form posed the following specific questions for consideration:

1. **What are the problems and what are the solutions for flooding in the Skokomish River Basin?**
2. **What are the problems with the aquatic environment and what are some possible solutions?**
3. **Is there anything that should be addressed or considered during this study?**

A total of **28** communications were submitted via the following channels:

- **Three** comment forms and one photo were submitted during the scoping meeting.
- **Nine** verbal comments were given during the scoping meeting and recorded by the court reporter.
- **Eight** letters were mailed to Patrick Cagney, Environmental Resources Section, US Army Corps of Engineers, P.O. Box 3755, Seattle, WA 98124.
- **Eight** email communications were emailed to Patrick Cagney at: patrick.t.cagney@usace.army.mil.

The following organizations submitted comments:

- Lodestone Engineering LLC
- Mason Conservation District
- Northwest Steelhead and Salmon Conservation Society (NWSSCS)
- Stillwater Sciences
- Taylor Shellfish Company
- The Wilderness Society
- United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) - Region 10

Comment Categories

Each communication may include several comments regarding different elements of the study. These specific comments were analyzed and categorized into themes listed in the table below. A comment may fit into more than one category, and thus may be repeated in several different categories. In some cases it is indicated that a comment is out of scope of the study. This means that while the comment may have mentioned a common theme, the specific comment addresses an issue that falls out of the scope of the Skokomish General Investigation Study. The table below shows the categories in alphabetical order, and the number of received comments per category.

Category Number	Category	Number of Comments
1	Agriculture	10
2	Alternative analysis/selection	8
3	Aquatic ecosystem restoration/channel restoration	10
4	Climate change	1
5	Community issues/public involvement*	4
6	Cultural significance	2
7	Cumulative and indirect impacts	2
8	Cushman Dam*	10
9	Economic benefits*	5
10	Elevated water table	9
11	Endangered species	9
12	Erosion	3
13	Fecal contamination	3
14	Federal interest	4
15	Flooding*	14
16	Forestry*	7
17	Habitat (and specific organisms or animals)	15
18	Other projects in the basin	4
19	Project area	3
20	Recreation/tourism	3
21	Sediment management	13
22	Socioeconomic impacts	3
23	Transportation*	3
24	Water quality	5

*Includes out of scope comments

Common Comment Categories

The categories chosen for comment analysis are those that appeared in five or more comments. The following analysis is a brief summary of the themes and concerns in each of those commonly occurring categories. All of the categorized comments received during the scoping period can be read verbatim following the category analysis. Written comments, as received verbatim, are included in Appendix N.

Agriculture

Organizations and residents alike mentioned agriculture as a significant concern, specifically the declining agricultural productivity in the Skokomish Valley. Numerous issues, including logging, erosion, flooding, and an elevated water table were identified as related to this decline in productivity. Residents said that their fields and their neighbor's fields are flooding more frequently than in the past, affecting their ability to farm the land.

Alternative analysis/selection

Numerous comments referred to the alternatives to be analyzed in the study. Comments specifically asked that the study include or address in the analysis:

- a cost-benefit analysis for the various activities in the Skokomish Basin,
- high groundwater,
- the value of shellfish resources in the valley,
- impacts to endangered, threatened or candidate species listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), and
- gravel removal.

Additionally, the EPA requested the inclusion of maps and tables that compare and contrast alternatives.

Aquatic ecosystem restoration/channel restoration

Restoration was a common theme throughout the comments. Several comments specifically mentioned channel restoration to reduce flooding and restore the natural functions of the river. Comments also referred to aquatic ecosystem restoration or habitat restoration and the importance of this habitat to numerous fish species. Other benefits identified as resulting from restoration included reducing erosion, improving the low dissolved oxygen levels in Hood Canal, improving agricultural lands by reducing flooding, and creating recreational and tourism opportunities.

Cushman Dam

Several comments mentioned the Cushman Dam flow regime as a topic to be addressed in the study. Comments and suggestions varied regarding the Cushman Dam and should be individually addressed according to the respondent.

Economic benefits

Economic benefits comments reflected a range of ideas, from the potential for commercial opportunities if restoration occurs, to remarks about the economic benefits to the government from the

forestry practices in the area. Purchasing land holdings from property owners in the flood-prone area was also mentioned as a potential economic benefit.

Elevated water table

Many comments listed a high or elevated water table as a concern due to its impact on flooding and agricultural production in the valley. Comments indicated that the elevated water table is a result of accumulation of gravel in the river bed and, in turn, is causing more flooding and rendering previously farmable land unusable.

Endangered species

With regard to ecological impairments in the Skokomish River Basin, comments identified endangered species, and specifically endangered salmon, as an essential consideration in the study. Comments ranged from recognizing the harm that has been done to salmon populations in the basin, to mentioning other work being done in the basin regarding endangered species. Comments indicated that poor water quality and frequent flooding have compromised endangered species livelihood and habitat in the basin.

Flooding

Numerous comments referred to flooding in the basin as a serious issue affecting residents, fish and habitat, and agricultural productivity in the valley. Comments indicated that the increase in flooding is due to forestry practices in the upper valley and the resulting erosion and sediment buildup in the river. Comments linked the increase in flooding to decreasing water quality, and voiced concern about the potential impacts of increased flooding on endangered species. Social concerns about flooding included the harm flooding has had on farmers and the overall community in the valley. Many comments cited specific instances of flooding as harmful to their personal livelihood as well as the entire landscape.

Forestry

Several comments suggested that the root cause of the increased flooding in the Skokomish Valley is the logging practices in the upper watershed. Comments asserted that the logging led to an increase in erosion, water run-off and sediment build-up in the river.

Habitat (and specific organisms or animals)

In addition to mentioning endangered species, comments also addressed habitat and other species. Along with opportunities resulting from aquatic habitat restoration, respondents also offered comments on the contributing causes of habitat loss. For example, sediment build-up in the river has led to dry spells in the river, blocking river flow. Poor water quality was frequently mentioned as a cause of aquatic life problems in the basin. Flooding and excess nutrient build-up from runoff are suggested as contributors to the poor water quality and low dissolved oxygen levels in the Hood Canal.

Sediment management

Comments suggested sediment management as a potential alternative for flood-risk management in the Skokomish River Basin. Sediment build-up is seen as a result of poor forestry practices and as

contributing to flooding and the degradation of the aquatic environment. Many comments recognized sediment as a concern and several suggested gravel removal or dredging as alternatives to restore the basin. The EPA offered extensive comments on sediment management, stating that “the EIS should discuss the procedure for evaluating sediment quality and discuss how the Washington State ‘sediment management standards’ would be applied.”

Water quality

Comments addressed water quality issues in the Skokomish River, including its link to the Hood Canal and Puget Sound, and the issue of low dissolved oxygen concentrations. The issue of poor water quality and sediment build-up in the Skokomish River is listed as a contributing factor to poor water quality in Hood Canal. Fecal contamination, although its own category, was also mentioned as an aspect of reduced water quality in the Skokomish River Basin and as something that should be addressed in the study.

Comment Analysis

The Skokomish River Basin has been identified as having problems such as frequent flooding, loss of productive agricultural land, and degradation of natural ecosystem habitat. Based on the project purpose, goals and objectives, the scope of the study is to evaluate whether there is a federal interest in aquatic ecosystem restoration and flood risk management. Comments indicate that the community is interested in both flood risk management and aquatic ecosystem restoration.

A large number of comments received addressed issues directly related to flood risk management, including comments related to the elevated water table, flooding, sediment management and water quality issues. Residents are specifically concerned about the frequent flooding and its impact to their property and livelihood, the high water table and its effect on agricultural productivity, and the sediment buildup in the river that is contributing to these issues. Comments suggest that the reduction of flooding would improve agricultural productivity and ultimately improve the economic condition of the valley. The Skokomish General Investigation Study should focus on implementing solutions designed to alleviate flooding and lower the elevated water table to address the concerns of many comments received.

Ecosystem restoration was also a common theme in comments received during the scoping period. Comments acknowledged that the problems facing the Skokomish River Basin have had negative effects on aquatic habitat and species, including endangered salmon. Comments specifically noted that frequent flooding and sediment buildup contribute to poor water quality, negatively affecting certain fish species. Comments encouraged channel restoration to improve habitat, as well as to alleviate flooding. The Skokomish General Investigation Study should focus on designing ecosystem restoration measures to address water quality, sediment management, and channel restoration to provide benefits to the overall health of the Skokomish River Basin aquatic ecosystem.

Several comments were received regarding the cost-benefit analysis that will be conducted for the project. Comments encouraged that the economic benefits from the federal government’s past use of the valley be included, specifically the sale of timber from the upper watershed, as well as the benefits received by City the Tacoma for electricity from the valley. Comments also asked that the potential economic benefits from an improved and restored watershed be included, such as improved fishing, increase in tourism, higher property values and better business opportunities.

A number of comments received were beyond the purpose of the project, or out of scope, as mentioned in the table on page 10. Comments identified as out of scope included comments related to the approval for building Cushman Dam, approval for harvesting timber out of the watershed, potential for Lake Cushman Dam failure, and decommissioning old forest roads. Another comment asked that the local flood board be re-instated to give residents in the valley a voice in this issue.

Categorized Scoping Comments

The categorized comments below were received from September 24 – October 25, 2010, and are presented verbatim as received.

Category	Comment	Author
Agriculture	...the fields that we used to farm down in there -- we ran cattle, we cut hay. We did a lot of different things. And those things, like he says, are all under water. You know, I watch our neighbor's fields -- Joe Rigal's -- it used to be up above ground, and it's all down underwater.	Bill Hunter Jr.
Agriculture	I am sure that many others have noted the Skokomish River watershed as a marine mammal shelter area, a river of cultural significance to the native Twana peoples, a migratory bird corridor, drains a Federal Forest and contains important agricultural land for feeding America's families. It is home to ESA salmonid species and is on 303(d) list of impaired water bodies.	Constance Ibsen
Agriculture	But in the past few years, I just -- every year, we go out and try to plow the fields and work everything. And with the flooding, you can't hardly plow a field for fear that we're going to get a flood in the fall that -- that is going to wash topsoil away.	Curt Hunter
Agriculture	There simply is too much gravel and nowhere for the water to go except underground, which raises the water table, rendering many of our fields unfarmable	Jayni Kamin
Agriculture	It appears obvious that agricultural setback berms will solve 90 percent of the river problems. The berms can be constructed by using NRCS standards and local materials such as dry gravel bars.	Jerry Richert
Agriculture	Recent flow regime changes have been implemented through the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's Project (FERC) #460, mandated conditions for re-licensing of the city of Tacoma's Cushman hydroelectric project on the North Fork. However, in spite of these successful actions, the mid-floodplain dwellers still have concerns that their landscapes have changed, their agricultural	Keith Dublanica

Category	Comment	Author
	practices warrant altering, and that scant attention is being applied there compared to upper and lower basin areas.	
Agriculture	When completing your cost/benefit analysis, please consider economic benefits for a wide range of ongoing activities that will be improved by successful completion of these identified measures. These include, but are not limited to, commercial, recreational, and tribal fishing in the river and in Hood Canal proper; agricultural production; shellfish production throughout Hood Canal; tourism and recreation that will be improved by improving ecosystem conditions in the river and Hood Canal proper; sustainable forestry that can be recovered if the lower valley is flood-proofed; and safe transportation corridors up the Skokomish Flats Road and State Highway 161 as they are floodproofed.	Richard Brocksmith
Agriculture	Fields are becoming permanently unavailable for production, with wetland indicators suggesting an irrevocable loss of arable land	Stillwater Sciences
Agriculture	If we cannot preserve productive agricultural land-not a consequence of intrinsic limitations or natural change, but simply because of our past mismanagement and present inaction-we will all lose.	Stillwater Sciences
Agriculture	Gravel aggradation is elevating the entire river bed, causing water tables to rise. This higher water table eliminates soil water-holding capacity and causes more frequent flooding during the winter. It also makes the soil too wet to plow during the spring and early summer, reducing the amount of tillable ground in the valley by 90 percent and severely limiting agricultural uses of the land. We urge you to consider alternatives and adopt a plan that will effectively address the problem of elevated water tables in the Skokomish Valley.	The Wilderness Society
Alternative analysis/selection	Question: Why should relocation of residences be a last resort measure-particularly if there are willing participants?	Duane Phinney
Alternative analysis/selection	We recommend including maps and diagrams of the area, each alternative, and any other relevant maps that assist in the understanding of the project area and proposed activities. We also recommend including tables that clearly compare and contrast the alternatives and their potential impacts to each resource and subbasin within the overall geographic area, as well as other tables that clearly compare and contrast the costs, benefits, and practicability of alternatives.	EPA

Category	Comment	Author
Alternative analysis/selection	When completing your cost/benefit analysis, please consider economic benefits for a wide range of ongoing activities that will be improved by successful completion of these identified measures. These include, but are not limited to, commercial, recreational, and tribal fishing in the river and in Hood Canal proper; agricultural production; shellfish production throughout Hood Canal; tourism and recreation that will be improved by improving ecosystem conditions in the river and Hood Canal proper; sustainable forestry that can be recovered if the lower valley is flood-proofed; and safe transportation corridors up the Skokomish Flats Road and State Highway 161 as they are floodproofed.	Richard Brocksmith
Alternative analysis/selection	In reviewing the Purpose and Need Statement in the published NOI, I found no mention of high groundwater. Do you intend to use this as a criteria when developing and evaluating alternatives? It would appear that any action which addresses the high groundwater and minimizes flooding will adversely affect the rapidly expanding wetlands in the valley. Are you prepared to develop, evaluate, and implement alternatives in which wetland impact is not fully mitigated?	Steve Thomas, Lodestone Engineering LLC
Alternative analysis/selection	I urge you to include the value of the Hood Canal's shellfish resources in scope of the EIS for the Skokomish GI. A healthy river system can significantly reduce the fecal bacteria/pathogen loading from the river. A number of the alternatives being considered such as off channel rearing habitat, wetland restoration, setback levees and sediment removal improve the function of the river system. These actions will reduce fecal loading and the public health hazard that occurs particularly during flood events when river waters inundate septic systems and wash manure from pastures.	Taylor Shellfish Company
Alternative analysis/selection	Gravel aggradation is elevating the entire river bed, causing water tables to rise. This higher water table eliminates soil water-holding capacity and causes more frequent flooding during the winter. It also makes the soil too wet to plow during the spring and early summer, reducing the amount of tillable ground in the valley by 90 percent and severely limiting agricultural uses of the land. We urge you to consider alternatives and adopt a plan that will effectively address the problem of elevated water tables in the Skokomish Valley.	The Wilderness Society
Alternative analysis/selection	The EIS should disclose whether or not the various alternatives being considered may impact endangered, threatened or candidate species listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), their habitats, and/or any of the three states' sensitive species.	EPA
Alternative analysis/selection	I would like to suggest that gravel removal must be included among the alternatives in this study.	Jason Ragan
Aquatic ecosystem restoration/channel restoration	It appears obvious that agricultural setback berms will solve 90 percent of the river problems. The berms can be constructed by using NRCS standards and local materials such as dry gravel bars.	Jerry Richert

Category	Comment	Author
Aquatic ecosystem restoration/channel restoration	To help the flooding and ground water issues we need to restore channel capacity by what ever we want to call it today, habitat restoration, dredging, bar scalping. We need the floor of the river lowered to the level of the 1950s-1960s at a minimum. In our studies during the 90's we showed 12 feet of gravel fill under the Highway 181 bridge. We need to address all drainage for the farms to lower ground water.	Bill Hunter
Aquatic ecosystem restoration/channel restoration	...and it's all just the aggradation in the river. You know, it's -- it's full of bed load. And the best thing we can do is restore the channel, restore the side channels.	Bill Hunter Jr.
Aquatic ecosystem restoration/channel restoration	Estuary restoration activities should be a high priority as restoration of natural estuarine processes would have upstream benefits and would benefit Skokomish River fishes, anadromous fishes from other areas of Hood Canal, waterfowl, shellfish, and water quality in Hood Canal.	Duane Phinney
Aquatic ecosystem restoration/channel restoration	Fish habitat enhancement measures will be a waste of money if sufficient spawning escapement is not allowed into the river to fully utilize available habitat. Commitment from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and Skokomish Tribe to properly manage fisheries under their respective jurisdictions to assure sufficient fish escape to fully seed presently available and enhanced habitat is mandatory.	Duane Phinney
Aquatic ecosystem restoration/channel restoration	A key component of site restoration involves success of revegetation to reduce erosion and impacts to the surrounding environment.	EPA
Aquatic ecosystem restoration/channel restoration	Responses to habitat degradation are being implemented with a number of watershed restoration projects taking place primarily in the upper basin reaches and at the river mouth within the Skokomish Indian Reservation. These projects are being implemented pro-actively by the US Forest Service and the Skokomish Tribe respectively with varied leveraged support.	Keith Dublinica
Aquatic ecosystem restoration/channel restoration	Restoration of the Skokomish watershed is critical to the health of the Hood Canal shellfish resources which are critical to commercial farmers such as Taylor as well as recreation/tourism and the tribes. Please include this in the scope of the EIS.	Taylor Shellfish Company
Aquatic ecosystem restoration/channel restoration	It is critically important for the Corps to recognize that the recovery of endangered salmon populations in Puget Sound and the reversal of low Hood Canal dissolved oxygen levels depend upon the ecological restoration of the Skokomish watershed.	The Wilderness Society
Aquatic ecosystem restoration/channel restoration	Removal of the dikes to return vitally important, natural functions of the Skokomish River estuary	NWSSCS
Climate Change	The EIS should describe the current conditions related to climate and future predictions of climate shifts in the Northwest. Potential effects of climate change may include changes in hydrology, sea level, weather patterns, precipitation rates, and chemical reaction rates. CO2 concentrations also lead to preferential fertilization and growth of specific plant species. The cumulative effects analysis should include a discussion on potential changes in precipitation, stream flow, and changes in vegetation.	EPA

Category	Comment	Author
Community issues/public involvement	Hopefully, they can, you know, give us a little more input, more chances for input outside of your public meetings and more chances for information to flow back and forth, you know, outside of your public forum here, with people in the Valley.	Bill Hunter Jr.
Community issues/public involvement	Lack of notification, no evacuation route or signs, warning system in case of Lake Cushman Dam failure that effects the Skokomish community should be considered during the study.	Joseph Leonard
Community issues/public involvement	And I'd like to ask -- I know Ross is here, and I saw two more Commissioners here, but I don't see them now. I'd like to ask them to re-instate our flood board so that the citizens and the residents of our Valley would have someone to talk to and someone to speak for us, especially with issues like this going on.	Paul Hunter
Community issues/public involvement	I hope that you will maintain a strong focus in the General Investigation on the consequences of past mismanagement that are exacting a profound cost on valley residents, as well as on the once-healthy anadromous fishery of this key river system.	Stillwater Sciences
Cultural significance	I am sure that many others have noted the Skokomish River watershed as a marine mammal shelter area, a river of cultural significance to the native Twana peoples, a migratory bird corridor, drains a Federal Forest and contains important agricultural land for feeding America's families. It is home to ESA salmonid species and is on 303(d) list of impaired water bodies.	Constance Ibsen
Cultural significance	The larger drainage basin is affected by all its tributaries. Hood Canal suffers from low dissolved oxygen levels as do parts of south Puget Sound. Puget Sound Chinook salmon, the most charismatic and ubiquitous of endangered salmon stocks, has areas supporting life history behaviors throughout the Sound including Hood Canal and the Skokomish. Both transient and resident Orca whales transit the Sound and Canal. These water-borne icons are part of the cultural legacies, tied to the landscape as deep as are all the native tribes that call the Salish Sea part of their historical homeland. Shellfish industries are known regionally, nationally, and internationally depend upon healthy water quality.	Keith Dublinica
Cumulative and indirect impacts	Because sediment delivery occurs from uplands that may be a mix of private, tribal, state, and federally owned areas, the EIS should strive to assess cumulative impacts across jurisdictions to disclose the sum of individual effects of all projects on the local environment. Cumulative effects analysis should also consider appropriate mitigation strategies to minimize adverse and to enhance beneficial cumulative effects. Monitoring and evaluation of the mitigation strategies' effectiveness would also be an important component of the proposed action.	EPA
Cumulative and indirect impacts	EPA has issued guidance on how we are to provide comments on the assessment of cumulative impacts, Consideration of Cumulative Impacts in EPA Review of NEPA Documents, which can be found on EPA web site at: www.epa.gov/compliance/resources/nepa.html . The guidance states that in order to assess the adequacy of the cumulative impacts assessment, five key areas should be considered. EPA tries to assess whether the cumulative effects' analysis:	EPA

Category	Comment	Author
	<p>1. Identifies resources if any, that are being cumulatively impacted;</p> <p>2. Determines the appropriate geographic (within natural ecological boundaries) area and the time period over which the effects have occurred and will occur;</p> <p>3. Looks at all past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions that have affected, are affecting, or would affect resources of concern;</p> <p>4. Describes a benchmark or baseline;</p> <p>5. Includes scientifically defensible threshold levels.</p>	
Cushman Dam	Stabilize the flows above the watershed, release it like a faucet all year long, and get that drainage cleaned up.	Art Tozier
Cushman Dam	Lake Cushman was built -- the dams were built when I was a very small youngster. But who made the approvals for that? It wasn't the people in the Valley, it wasn't the Tribe, it wasn't Skokomish Valley. It was all the federal agencies that gave them permission.	Bill Hunter
Cushman Dam	There should be an inventory and evaluation of potential for water storage facilities in South Fork streams and North Fork streams--particularly below the Cushman dams--to reduce the peak of floods and augment flow during the summer low flow period	Duane Phinney
Cushman Dam	Lack of notification, no evacuation route or signs, warning system in case of Lake Cushman Dam failure that effects the Skokomish community should be considered during the study.	Joseph Leonard
Cushman Dam	Recent flow regime changes have been implemented through the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's Project (FERC) #460, mandated conditions for re-Licensing of the city of Tacoma's Cushman hydroelectric project on the North Fork. However, in spite of these successful actions, the mid-floodplain dwellers still have concerns that their landscapes have changed, their agricultural practices warrant altering, and that scant attention is being applied there compared to upper and lower basin areas.	Keith Dublanica
Cushman Dam	The MCD has seen positive results from restoring streamside protective buffers with conservation efforts, some of which are the largest projects in the Hood Canal basin. The increased flows coming from the North Fork through the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's Project (PERC) #460, mandated conditions for re-licensing of the city of Tacoma's Cushman hydroelectric project have also influenced this.	Mason Conservation District
Cushman Dam	Restoration of adequate flows in the North Fork Skokomish River from Lake Cushman to sustain wild runs of steelhead trout and Pacific salmon species	NWSSCS
Cushman Dam	I caution against relying on measures proposed in the recently issued FERC decision on the relicensing of Cushman Dam; I have reviewed them in detail, and I am disappointed to report that they provide no basis to assume that recently implemented changes to the flow regime of the North Fork will alleviate gravel build-up in the mainstem or reduce the frequency of overbank flows that regularly inundate the lower valley.	Stillwater Sciences

Category	Comment	Author
Cushman Dam	The FEIS thus affirms that the presence or absence of the project is ultimately irrelevant to channel aggradation, and so any modification to the flow regime that lies between two extremes (namely, near-total diversion and fully uncontrolled flow) will also have no effect on aggradation. The FEIS also uses a purported channel capacity based on a reference over 20 years old (from the FEIS: "Mainstem aggradation has reduced the channel's conveyance capacity. Historically, the channel could convey about 12,000 cfs without flowing over its banks. Today, flooding occurs at flows of about 4,650 cfs or more [Canning, 1988]."). I recently obtained a rating curve directly from USGS personnel in Tacoma for the gage at the US 101 bridge crossing; it reminds us of the magnitude of channel infilling over the last several decades (over 3 feet in the last 27 years). Alas, this problem will not be resolved with old data and wishful thinking.	Stillwater Sciences
Cushman Dam	The new flow regime from Cushman Dam will increase the frequency and duration of overbank flooding; and the current pace of watershed rehabilitation up the South Fork will likely provide watershed-scale improvements several decades too late for anyone to benefit	Stillwater Sciences
Economic benefits	I say the federal government reaped tremendous economic benefit by selling the timber off the upper watershed, causing ruined farmland, flooded homes and barns, decades-old building moratorium that eliminates any new building, even fixing up buildings, in the Valley; also, a choked-up river system.	Jim Hunter
Economic benefits	If we're talking about the whole river system, why aren't we talking about the income from the Forest Service, who, like I say, took millions of board feet of timber. And the City of Tacoma is going on and on, selling electricity. And that should be brought into this cost/benefit ratio in some way.	Jim Hunter
Economic benefits	Purchase land holdings from willing property owners in the Skokomish River valley	NWSSCS
Economic benefits	When completing your cost/benefit analysis, please consider economic benefits for a wide range of ongoing activities that will be improved by successful completion of these identified measures. These include, but are not limited to, commercial, recreational, and tribal fishing in the river and in Hood Canal proper; agricultural production; shellfish production throughout Hood Canal; tourism and recreation that will be improved by improving ecosystem conditions in the river and Hood Canal proper; sustainable forestry that can be recovered if the lower valley is flood-proofed; and safe transportation corridors up the Skokomish Flats Road and State Highway 161 as they are floodproofed.	Richard Brocksmith
Economic benefits	In particular, the Corps' evaluation of federal interest in aquatic ecosystem restoration and flood risk management in the Skokomish River Basin must include the benefits that will accrue to Hood Canal and Puget Sound through restoration and flood reduction in the Skokomish watershed. These benefits include opportunities for improved commercial and recreational salmon fishing, shellfish production, and tourism, as well as higher property values and the	The Wilderness Society

Category	Comment	Author
	enhanced residential and business opportunities associated with a healthy environment in the Hood Canal/Puget Sound region.	
Elevated water table	The ground water level and flooding are killing ag in the valley.	Bill Hunter
Elevated water table	...because of the river channel being so high that it raises the aquifer. And our water table is just -- you dig a posthole and you hit water.	Curt Hunter
Elevated water table	For those of us who call the Skokomish Valley home, the primary issue, besides the frequent flooding and the decades-old building moratorium, is the ever-increasing water table, which is the result of the immense aggregation of the riverbed. The river is spreading underground, like a cancer, across the Valley floor and at an alarming rate, making much of what was once productive land unfarmable. I am concerned that the rising water table was not listed. There simply is too much gravel and nowhere for the water to go except underground, which raises the water table, rendering many of our fields unfarmable.	Jayni Kamin
Elevated water table	You didn't mention the underground water problems that we have. I'd like to just keep bringing that up and driving it home. That is a main concern we have in the Valley, is rising water table. We have many, many acres that are rendered pretty near useless now because of the water table.	Jim Hunter
Elevated water table	You know, we know about the groundwater; we've seen it. You know, we know about the degradation; we see it.	Joseph Pavel
Elevated water table	the root cause of the chronic Skokomish River flooding issues, low flows much of the year and a higher than usual water table is the federal government's (US Forest Service) irresponsible forestry practices (i.e., clear cut logging on unstable slopes) which resulted in destroying the natural processes of water retention (storm water and snowmelt) and the natural release of this water into the Skokomish River throughout the year.	NWSSCS
Elevated water table	In reviewing the Purpose and Need Statement in the published NOI, I found no mention of high groundwater. Do you intend to use this as a criteria when developing and evaluating alternatives? It would appear that any action which addresses the high groundwater and minimizes flooding will adversely affect the rapidly expanding wetlands in the valley. Are you prepared to develop, evaluate, and implement alternatives in which wetland impact is not fully mitigated?	Steve Thomas, Lodestone Engineering LLC
Elevated water table	Gravel aggradation is elevating the entire river bed, causing water tables to rise. This higher water table eliminates soil water-holding capacity and causes more frequent flooding during the winter. It also makes the soil too wet to plow during the spring and early summer, reducing the amount of tillable ground in the valley by 90 percent and severely limiting agricultural uses of the land. We urge you to consider alternatives and adopt a plan that will effectively	The Wilderness Society

Category	Comment	Author
	address the problem of elevated water tables in the Skokomish Valley.	
Elevated water table	The residents of the lower valley, Tribal members and landowners alike, are slowly but inexorably going under water. Reduced channel capacity, overbank flooding, and rising groundwater levels were all explicitly acknowledged at the October 7th meeting, and I hope you will continue to make them centerpieces of the General Investigation.	Stillwater Sciences
Endangered species	I am sure that many others have noted the Skokomish River watershed as a marine mammal shelter area, a river of cultural significance to the native Twana peoples, a migratory bird corridor, drains a Federal Forest and contains important agricultural land for feeding America's families. It is home to ESA salmonid species and is on 303(d) list of impaired water bodies.	Constance Ibsen
Endangered species	The EIS should disclose whether or not the various alternatives being considered may impact endangered, threatened or candidate species listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), their habitats, and/or any of the three states' sensitive species. The draft EIS should describe the critical habitat for the species; identify any impacts the various alternative actions will have on the species and their critical habitats; and describe how the proposed actions will meet all requirements under ESA, including consultation with the appropriate federal agencies and the biological assessments and opinions of that consultation process. In addition to listed species, the EIS should describe the overall flora and fauna in the area and impacts of the project on the biota. Given the watershed approach of this process, the EIS should provide details on the ecological interactions between species and habitats and the effects of the various alternatives on populations, habitats and ecological interactions.	EPA
Endangered species	I would like to suggest that gravel removal must be included among the alternatives in this study. The endangered fish obviously need quality water and habitat to have any chance of recovery. The water is still in the Skokomish Valley, it is just flowing under a massive amount of sediment.	Jason Ragan
Endangered species	The larger drainage basin is affected by all its tributaries. Hood Canal suffers from low dissolved oxygen levels as do parts of south Puget Sound. Puget Sound Chinook salmon, the most charismatic and ubiquitous of endangered salmon stocks, has areas supporting life history behaviors throughout the Sound including Hood Canal and the Skokomish. Both transient and resident Orca whales transit the Sound and Canal. These water-borne icons are part of the cultural legacies, tied to the landscape as deep as are all the native tribes that call the Salish Sea part of their historical homeland. Shellfish industries are known regionally, nationally, and	Keith Dublinica

Category	Comment	Author
	internationally depend upon healthy water quality.	
Endangered species	Sediment buildup in the Skokomish River not only increases the frequency of flooding during the rainy season, it also blocks the river channel to migration and spawning by endangered Puget Sound salmon and trout populations during the late summer and early fall. The bed of the Skokomish River's South Fork has gone completely dry for a period of weeks or months nearly every year since 2003.	The Wilderness Society
Endangered species	I am no less aware of the range of ecological impairments in the lower river, and I applaud ongoing and future efforts to improve conditions for ESA-listed species as well.	Stillwater Sciences
Endangered species	...the ecosystem damage caused by years of natural resource consumption. We see much of this damage as harm to endangered species and their habitats, specifically those of Puget Sound Chinook, Hood Canal summer chum, coastal steelhead, and coastal bull trout.	Mason Conservation District
Endangered species	It is critically important for the Corps to recognize that the recovery of endangered salmon populations in Puget Sound and the reversal of low Hood Canal dissolved oxygen levels depend upon the ecological restoration of the Skokomish watershed.	The Wilderness Society
Endangered species	The Skokomish River floods more frequently than any other river in Washington State, due to aggradation of the river bottom. This flooding directly harms endangered salmon populations and flushes excess nutrients and harmful bacteria into Hood Canal. The degraded water quality conditions contribute to the low dissolved oxygen levels in Hood Canal, resulting in fish kills.	The Wilderness Society
Erosion	Below Highway 101 (and perhaps elsewhere) are areas where old car bodies have been used for rip rap. These should be removed as they generally add to bank erosion rather than alleviate it and are the source of pollutants.	Duane Phinney
Erosion	Many culverts are too small or improperly placed-adding to stream bed and bank erosion and blocking upstream passage of fishes.	Duane Phinney
Erosion	These recommendations that are now nearly a quarter of a century old include: 1. Stabilize failed or failing slopes to help reduce erosion	NWSSCS
Fecal contamination	When the agricultural lands and septic systems of the Skokomish Valley are frequently flooded, there is an increased nutrient load, as well as fecal coliform, that are carried into Annas Bay. The sources of fecal coliform are human, livestock and wildlife.	Jason Ragan

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Fecal contamination	I urge you to include the value of the Hood Canal's shellfish resources in scope of the EIS for the Skokomish GI. A healthy river system can significantly reduce the fecal bacteria/pathogen loading from the river. A number of the alternatives being considered such as off channel rearing habitat, wetland restoration, setback levees and sediment removal improve the function of the river system. These actions will reduce fecal loading and the public health hazard that occurs particularly during flood events when river waters inundate septic systems and wash manure from pastures.	Taylor Shellfish Company
Fecal contamination	Shellfish are filter feeders and as you are no doubt aware require exceptionally clean water to grow them in. Growing areas are regulated by the State Department of Health based on the presence of fecal coliform bacteria and indicator organism used to detect the presence of human pathogens. The beds at the mouth of the Skokomish River have been plagued with pollution closures for years. A TMDL was recently completed and is being implemented to attempt to address the sources of pollution.	Taylor Shellfish Company
Federal interest	And I really think the government needs to step up and, you know, help us out.	Justin Bays
Federal interest	I strongly believe there is wide-spread federal interest in this General Investigation of the Skokomish River.	Keith Dublanica
Federal interest	The Mason Conservation District believes there is wide-spread federal interest in this General Investigation of the Skokomish River.	Mason Conservation District
Federal interest	The MCD believes this is a project demands Congressional attention and the anticipated support for wide-reaching and a comprehensive watershed restoration initiative.	Mason Conservation District
Flooding	Now we see a deep, deep degradation of the drainage and a soft geology, the softest known to man, that, if I stood there and piled up a bucket of dirt and then I took a five-gallon bucket of water and I dumped it on top of it, it would be right down there in a big, muddy mess. Well, that's what we've got today. We've got degradation of everything.	Art Tozier
Flooding	The increase in flooding not only hurts our ag but water quality too. We now have had flooding in every month of the year not just the storm months, including the growing season, harvest season, and summer too.	Bill Hunter
Flooding	TPU is dumping more water in the valley aggravating the ground water situation and flooding. The ground water level and flooding are killing ag in the valley.	Bill Hunter
Flooding	But in the past few years, I just -- every year, we go out and try to plow the fields and work everything. And with the flooding, you can't hardly plow a field for fear that we're going to get a flood in the fall that -- that is going to wash topsoil away.	Curt Hunter
Flooding	I believe that the increased nutrient loads from frequent flood events contribute to the dissolved oxygen problems in Hood Canal. I strongly suggest that the negative effects of frequent flooding on Annas Bay and Hood Canal should be included in the scope of the investigation.	Jason Ragan

Category	Comment	Author
Flooding	When the agricultural lands and septic systems of the Skokomish Valley are frequently flooded, there is an increased nutrient load, as well as fecal coliform, that are carried into Annas Bay. The sources of fecal coliform are human, livestock and wildlife.	Jason Ragan
Flooding	In addition, I have also developed a keen sense of the social challenges this damaged landscape and flooding has had on the communities and families who have settled here. Whether the community has been here since time immemorial, as the Skokomish Tribe believes, since before statehood for homesteaders and later dwellers, or those recently locating to the area, they all share a concern of the landscape's issues and how their respective communities are negatively impacted.	Keith Dublinica
Flooding	The Tribe has experienced flood impacts the longest. This basin continues to flood at lesser precipitation events more frequently, and the dynamic nature of the hydrograph defines this river as the first to flood in the state.	Keith Dublinica
Flooding	the root cause of the chronic Skokomish River flooding issues, low flows much of the year and a higher than usual water table is the federal government's (US Forest Service) irresponsible forestry practices (i.e., clear cut logging on unstable slopes) which resulted in destroying the natural processes of water retention (storm water and snowmelt) and the natural release of this water into the Skokomish River throughout the year.	NWSSCS
Flooding	And I'd like to ask -- I know Ross is here, and I saw two more Commissioners here, but I don't see them now. I'd like to ask them to reinstate our flood board so that the citizens and the residents of our Valley would have someone to talk to and someone to speak for us, especially with issues like this going on.	Paul Hunter
Flooding	The residents of the lower valley, Tribal members and landowners alike, are slowly but inexorably going under water. Reduced channel capacity, overbank flooding, and rising groundwater levels were all explicitly acknowledged at the October 7th meeting, and I hope you will continue to make them centerpieces of the General Investigation.	Stillwater Sciences
Flooding	Gravel aggradation is elevating the entire river bed, causing water tables to rise. This higher water table eliminates soil water-holding capacity and causes more frequent flooding during the winter. It also makes the soil too wet to plow during the spring and early summer, reducing the amount of tillable ground in the valley by 90 percent and severely limiting agricultural uses of the land. We urge you to consider alternatives and adopt a plan that will effectively address the problem of elevated water tables in the Skokomish Valley.	The Wilderness Society
Flooding	Sediment buildup in the Skokomish River not only increases the frequency of flooding during the rainy season, it also blocks the river channel to migration and spawning by endangered Puget Sound salmon and trout populations during the late summer and early fall. The bed of the Skokomish River's South Fork has gone completely dry for a period of weeks or months nearly every year since 2003.	The Wilderness Society

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Flooding	The Skokomish River floods more frequently than any other river in Washington State, due to aggradation of the river bottom. This flooding directly harms endangered salmon populations and flushes excess nutrients and harmful bacteria into Hood Canal. The degraded water quality conditions contribute to the low dissolved oxygen levels in Hood Canal, resulting in fish kills.	The Wilderness Society
Forestry	The other issue is the US Government logged the watershed and flushed the gravel down at an accelerated rate and then walked away. The ground water level and flooding are killing ag in the valley.	Bill Hunter
Forestry	Who approved this obscene yield that harvests the timber in our watershed faster than any other national forest?	Bill Hunter
Forestry	I am very sad to see the forest dying east of Hwy 101.	Doris Wilson
Forestry	the historic rate of logging is unsustainable, clear cuts are large and environmentally damaging, the watershed is replete with logging roads that send huge loads of silt and other material directly into the streams by virtue of lack of proper consideration for storm water management	Duane Phinney
Forestry	I say the federal government reaped tremendous economic benefit by selling the timber off the upper watershed, causing ruined farmland, flooded homes and barns, decades-old building moratorium that eliminates any new building, even fixing up buildings, in the Valley; also, a choked-up river system.	Jim Hunter
Forestry	the root cause of the chronic Skokomish River flooding issues, low flows much of the year and a higher than usual water table is the federal government's (US Forest Service) irresponsible forestry practices (i.e., clear cut logging on unstable slopes) which resulted in destroying the natural processes of water retention (storm water and snowmelt) and the natural release of this water into the Skokomish River throughout the year.	NWSSCS
Forestry	When completing your cost/benefit analysis, please consider economic benefits for a wide range of ongoing activities that will be improved by successful completion of these identified measures. These include, but are not limited to, commercial, recreational, and tribal fishing in the river and in Hood Canal proper; agricultural production; shellfish production throughout Hood Canal; tourism and recreation that will be improved by improving ecosystem conditions in the river and Hood Canal proper; sustainable forestry that can be recovered if the lower valley is flood-proofed; and safe transportation corridors up the Skokomish Flats Road and State Highway 161 as they are floodproofed.	Richard Brocksmith
Habitat (and specific organisms or animals)	I am sure that many others have noted the Skokomish River watershed as a marine mammal shelter area, a river of cultural significance to the native Twana peoples, a migratory bird corridor, drains a Federal Forest and contains important agricultural land for feeding America's families. It is home to ESA salmonid species and is on 303(d) list of impaired water bodies.	Constance Ibsen
Habitat (and specific organisms or animals)	Commitment from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and Skokomish Tribe to properly manage fisheries under their respective jurisdictions to assure sufficient fish escape to fully seed	Duane Phinney

Category	Comment	Author
	presently available and enhanced habitat is mandatory.	
Habitat (and specific organisms or animals)	Fish habitat enhancement measures will be a waste of money if sufficient spawning escapement is not allowed into the river to fully utilize available habitat. Commitment from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and Skokomish Tribe to properly manage fisheries under their respective jurisdictions to assure sufficient fish escape to fully seed presently available and enhanced habitat is mandatory.	Duane Phinney
Habitat (and specific organisms or animals)	Many culverts are too small or improperly placed-adding to stream bed and bank erosion and blocking upstream passage of fishes.	Duane Phinney
Habitat (and specific organisms or animals)	Sections of the lower South Fork go dry during the summer low flow period, inhibiting movement of certain fish species and reducing rearing area for steelhead trout, coho salmon, and other fish species, There should be an evaluation of potential methods to address this problem (wells, for example).	Duane Phinney
Habitat (and specific organisms or animals)	The EIS should disclose whether or not the various alternatives being considered may impact endangered, threatened or candidate species listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), their habitats, and/or any of the three states' sensitive species. The draft EIS should describe the critical habitat for the species; identify any impacts the various alternative actions will have on the species and their critical habitats; and describe how the proposed actions will meet all requirements under ESA, including consultation with the appropriate federal agencies and the biological assessments and opinions of that consultation process. In addition to listed species, the EIS should describe the overall flora and fauna in the area and impacts of the project on the biota. Given the watershed approach of this process, the EIS should provide details on the ecological interactions between species and habitats and the effects of the various alternatives on populations, habitats and ecological interactions.	EPA
Habitat (and specific organisms or animals)	Responses to habitat degradation are being implemented with a number of watershed restoration projects taking place primarily in the upper basin reaches and at the river mouth within the Skokomish Indian Reservation. These projects are being implemented pro-actively by the US Forest Service and the Skokomish Tribe respectively with varied leveraged support	Keith Dublinica
Habitat (and specific organisms or animals)	The larger drainage basin is affected by all its tributaries. Hood Canal suffers from low dissolved oxygen levels as do parts of south Puget Sound. Puget Sound Chinook salmon, the most charismatic and ubiquitous of endangered salmon stocks, has areas supporting life history behaviors throughout the Sound including Hood Canal and the Skokomish. Both transient and resident Orca whales transit the Sound and Canal. These water-borne icons are part of the cultural legacies, tied to the landscape as deep as are all the native tribes that call the Salish Sea part of their historical homeland. Shellfish industries are known regionally, nationally, and internationally depend upon healthy water quality.	Keith Dublinica

Category	Comment	Author
Habitat (and specific organisms or animals)	...the ecosystem damage caused by years of natural resource consumption. We see much of this damage as harm to endangered species and their habitats, specifically those of Puget Sound Chinook, Hood Canal summer chum, coastal steelhead, and coastal bull trout.	Mason Conservation District
Habitat (and specific organisms or animals)	Restoration of adequate flows in the North Fork Skokomish River from Lake Cushman to sustain wild runs of steelhead trout and Pacific salmon species	NWSSCS
Habitat (and specific organisms or animals)	When completing your cost/benefit analysis, please consider economic benefits for a wide range of ongoing activities that will be improved by successful completion of these identified measures. These include, but are not limited to, commercial, recreational, and tribal fishing in the river and in Hood Canal proper; agricultural production; shellfish production throughout Hood Canal; tourism and recreation that will be improved by improving ecosystem conditions in the river and Hood Canal proper; sustainable forestry that can be recovered if the lower valley is flood-proofed; and safe transportation corridors up the Skokomish Flats Road and State Highway 161 as they are floodproofed.	Richard Brocksmith
Habitat (and specific organisms or animals)	I hope that you will maintain a strong focus in the General Investigation on the consequences of past mismanagement that are exacting a profound cost on valley residents, as well as on the once-healthy anadromous fishery of this key river system.	Stillwater Sciences
Habitat (and specific organisms or animals)	In particular, the Corps' evaluation of federal interest in aquatic ecosystem restoration and flood risk management in the Skokomish River Basin must include the benefits that will accrue to Hood Canal and Puget Sound through restoration and flood reduction in the Skokomish watershed. These benefits include opportunities for improved commercial and recreational salmon fishing, shellfish production.	The Wilderness Society
Habitat (and specific organisms or animals)	Sediment buildup in the Skokomish River not only increases the frequency of flooding during the rainy season, it also blocks the river channel to migration and spawning by endangered Puget Sound salmon and trout populations during the late summer and early fall. The bed of the Skokomish River's South Fork has gone completely dry for a period of weeks or months nearly every year since 2003.	The Wilderness Society
Habitat (and specific organisms or animals)	The Skokomish River floods more frequently than any other river in Washington State, due to aggradation of the river bottom. This flooding directly harms endangered salmon populations and flushes excess nutrients and harmful bacteria into Hood Canal. The degraded water quality conditions contribute to the low dissolved oxygen levels in Hood Canal, resulting in fish kills.	The Wilderness Society
Other projects in the basin	We recommend that the EIS discuss the other work occurring in the basin and any road blocks that may affect the analysis. As you may be aware the Walla Walla Corps' district is also working on addressing sediment on a watershed scale and they are in the process of developing a supplemental draft EIS for the Lower Snake River. We have a keen interest in both of these projects and understand that characterizing upland sediment sources is complex and coordinating multiple agencies can be a challenge.	EPA

Category	Comment	Author
Other projects in the basin	Responses to habitat degradation are being implemented with a number of watershed restoration projects taking place primarily in the upper basin reaches and at the river mouth within the Skokomish Indian Reservation. These projects are being implemented pro-actively by the US Forest Service and the Skokomish Tribe respectively with varied leveraged support	Keith Dublanica
Other projects in the basin	The MCD has seen positive results from restoring streamside protective buffers with conservation efforts, some of which are the largest projects in the Hood Canal basin.	Mason Conservation District
Other projects in the basin	I hope that you have now been able to obtain and study a copy of our recently completed final draft of the Skokomish River Chinook Salmon Recovery Plan as I believe you will find insightful information as to the diagnosis of altered conditions that have led to the current state we find the river. I believe this information will be complementary to the Corp's findings	Richard Brocksmith
Project area	I urge you to include the estuary and nearshore marine waters of Hood Canal in the General Investigation.	Constance Ibsen
Project area	We recommend including maps and diagrams of the area, each alternative, and any other relevant maps that assist in the understanding of the project area and proposed activities. We also recommend including tables that clearly compare and contrast the alternatives and their potential impacts to each resource and subbasin within the overall geographic area, as well as other tables that clearly compare and contrast the costs, benefits, and practicability of alternatives.	EPA
Project area	Recent flow regime changes have been implemented through the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's Project (FERC) #460, mandated conditions for re-licensing of the city of Tacoma's Cushman hydroelectric project on the North Fork. However, in spite of these successful actions, the mid-floodplain dwellers still have concerns that their landscapes have changed, their agricultural practices warrant altering, and that scant attention is being applied there compared to upper and lower basin areas.	Keith Dublanica
Recreation/tourism	When completing your cost/benefit analysis, please consider economic benefits for a wide range of ongoing activities that will be improved by successful completion of these identified measures. These include, but are not limited to, commercial, recreational, and tribal fishing in the river and in Hood Canal proper; agricultural production; shellfish production throughout Hood Canal; tourism and recreation that will be improved by improving ecosystem conditions in the river and Hood Canal proper; sustainable forestry that can be recovered if the lower valley is flood-proofed; and safe transportation corridors up the Skokomish Flats Road and State Highway 161 as they are floodproofed.	Richard Brocksmith
Recreation/tourism	Restoration of the Skokomish watershed is critical to the health of the Hood Canal shellfish resources which are critical to commercial farmers such as Taylor as well as recreation/tourism and the tribes. Please include this in the scope of the EIS.	Taylor Shellfish Company

Category	Comment	Author
Recreation/tourism	In particular, the Corps' evaluation of federal interest in aquatic ecosystem restoration and flood risk management in the Skokomish River Basin must include the benefits that will accrue to Hood Canal and Puget Sound through restoration and flood reduction in the Skokomish watershed. These benefits include opportunities for improved tourism.	The Wilderness Society
Sediment management	To help the flooding and ground water issues we need to restore channel capacity by what ever we want to call it today, habitat restoration, dredging, bar scalping. We need the floor of the river lowered to the level of the 1950s-1960s at a minimum. In our studies during the 90's we showed 12 feet of gravel fill under the Highway 181 bridge. We need to address all drainage for the farms to lower ground water.	Bill Hunter
Sediment management	...and it's all just the aggradation in the river. You know, it's -- it's full of bed load. And the best thing we can do is restore the channel, restore the side channels.	Bill Hunter Jr.
Sediment management	Horses used to be used to scoop and remove gravel deposits from the river channel - no one has been doing that for 70 years! Help make a more adequate channel for the river.	Doris Wilson
Sediment management	EPA strongly supports the Corps' strategy to conduct a comprehensive watershed study for assessing sediment sources and planning for reduction of elevated sediment loads. In addition we promote managing sediment as a resource in the river system, working with natural transport processes wherever possible, and a restorative approach to move toward environmentally protective and ecologically sustainable sediment management in the watershed.	EPA
Sediment management	Of particular interest to EPA is the beneficial reuse of sediment removal from the channel or floodplain. Modeling can help develop a better understanding of locations and quantities of sources of sediment suitable for beneficial use and allow us to match sediment sources with potential use locations in advance of dredging or other active sediment management prescriptions.	EPA
Sediment management	The EIS should discuss the procedure for evaluating sediment quality and discuss how the Washington State sediment management standards' would be applied. The EIS should disclose any past sediment characterization, what sediment analyses would be needed, and the presence of any Chemicals of Concern (COCs) that will be considered in the analysis.	EPA
Sediment management	I would like to suggest that gravel removal must be included among the alternatives in this study. The endangered fish obviously need quality water and habitat to have any chance of recovery. The water is still in the Skokomish Valley, it is just flowing under a massive amount of sediment.	Jason Ragan
Sediment management	And I also believe that the solution to this devastation is simple. We must remove the gravel in the middle of the river, which is clogging up the system, preventing fish passage, and destroying our farms.	Jayni Kamin
Sediment management	There simply is too much gravel and nowhere for the water to go except underground, which raises the water table, rendering many of our fields unfarmable	Jayni Kamin

Category	Comment	Author
Sediment management	The solution is simple. Remove the gravel which is destroying the river -- the river, our farms, and our community.	Jim Hunter
Sediment management	Hundreds of feet of alluvium and sediment have been estimated to be deposited in the Skokomish valley floor and the channel has lost conveyance capacity with a great amount of material still in the storage in the upper basin. Gravity and fluvial dynamics will bring that material downstream.	Keith Dublanica
Sediment management	Limited, ongoing dredging to improve natural functions of Skokomish River and its tributaries	NWSSCS
Sediment management	I caution against relying on measures proposed in the recently issued FERC decision on the relicensing of Cushman Dam; I have reviewed them in detail, and I am disappointed to report that they provide no basis to assume that recently implemented changes to the flow regime of the North Fork will alleviate gravel build-up in the mainstem or reduce the frequency of overbank flows that regularly inundate the lower valley.	Stillwater Sciences
Socioeconomic impacts	I am sure that many others have noted the Skokomish River watershed as a marine mammal shelter area, a river of cultural significance to the native Twana peoples, a migratory bird corridor, drains a Federal Forest and contains important agricultural land for feeding America's families. It is home to ESA salmonid species and is on 303(d) list of impaired water bodies.	Constance Ibsen
Socioeconomic impacts	In addition, I have also developed a keen sense of the social challenges this damaged landscape and flooding has had on the communities and families who have settled here. Whether the community has been here since time immemorial, as the Skokomish Tribe believes, since before statehood for homesteaders and later dwellers, or those recently locating to the area, they all share a concern of the landscape's issues and how their respective communities are negatively impacted.	Keith Dublanica
Socioeconomic impacts	TWS believes that the Skokomish FR/EIS must take into account the environmental and socioeconomic impacts and benefits of Skokomish River flooding and restoration on the natural resources and people not only in the Skokomish watershed, but also in the Hood Canal and Puget Sound, which was designated as an Estuary of National Significance by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in 1988.	The Wilderness Society
Transportation	So I've always thought that it would be a good thing to look into raising that road so that the people in the upper Valley can get out, because we -- right now, I go over the 800 line, and -- but the 800 line isn't stable. I mean, it washes out.	Justin Bays
Transportation	Continue to decommission ineffective, failing forest roads.	NWSSCS

Category	Comment	Author
Transportation	When completing your cost/benefit analysis, please consider economic benefits for a wide range of ongoing activities that will be improved by successful completion of these identified measures. These include, but are not limited to, commercial, recreational, and tribal fishing in the river and in Hood Canal proper; agricultural production; shellfish production throughout Hood Canal; tourism and recreation that will be improved by improving ecosystem conditions in the river and Hood Canal proper; sustainable forestry that can be recovered if the lower valley is flood-proofed; and safe transportation corridors up the Skokomish Flats Road and State Highway 161 as they are floodproofed.	Richard Brocksmith
Water quality	Determine sediment levels and water quality monitoring parameters for baseline evaluation. Also, consider 303 (d) listing for Skok.	Constance Ibsen
Water quality	If Washington State Department of Ecology has developed a water quality restoration plan or Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for 303(d) listed waters, EPA recommends that the Corps coordinate with Ecology as the TMDL is implemented. If a TMDL has not yet been established for a 303(d) water body, then the EIS should demonstrate that there will be no net degradation of water quality to the 303(3) listed waters. Antidegradation provisions of the Clean Water Act apply to those waterbodies where water quality standards are currently being met. This provision prohibits degrading water quality unless an analysis shows that important economic and social development necessitates degrading water quality. The EIS should indicate how the antidegradation provisions would be met.	EPA
Water quality	The EIS should include information on the water quality of the Skokomish basin and which, if any, waters are impaired.	EPA
Water quality	The larger drainage basin is affected by all its tributaries. Hood Canal suffers from low dissolved oxygen levels as do parts of south Puget Sound. Puget Sound Chinook salmon, the most charismatic and ubiquitous of endangered salmon stocks, has areas supporting life history behaviors throughout the Sound including Hood Canal and the Skokomish. Both transient and resident Orca whales transit the Sound and Canal. These water-borne icons are part of the cultural legacies, tied to the landscape as deep as are all the native tribes that call the Salish Sea part of their historical homeland. Shellfish industries are known regionally, nationally, and internationally depend upon healthy water quality.	Keith Dubalnica
Water quality	The Skokomish River floods more frequently than any other river in Washington State, due to aggradation of the river bottom. This flooding directly harms endangered salmon populations and flushes excess nutrients and harmful bacteria into Hood Canal. The degraded water quality conditions contribute to the low dissolved oxygen levels in Hood Canal, resulting in fish kills.	The Wilderness Society

Next Steps

The comments received during the NEPA Scoping period were collected, analyzed, and shared with the Corps, Mason County, and Skokomish Indian Tribe. This scoping summary report will also be posted on the project's website at:

<http://www.nws.usace.army.mil/publicmenu/menu.cfm?sitename=skokogi&pagename=home>.

Pertinent comments will be taken into account as the Skokomish General Investigation Study moves forward.

Public and agency outreach will continue throughout the duration of the project, including information sessions to discuss and present project updates, website updates, and meetings with organizations, agencies and tribal representatives.

There will be a formal review and comment process when the Feasibility Study/Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) is issued, scheduled for 2014, including an open house and public hearing. Comments made on the Feasibility Study/DEIS will be formally addressed in the Final Environmental Impact Statement. The Feasibility Study/EIS is expected to be completed in 2016.