

Michael Lilliquist

The hard truth is that water in the Nooksack River is finite. The basin's water supply is overtaxed, and there is not enough water available for all users under the current regime, especially in the summer time. No fancy or expensive projects will change this fact.

But conservation and serious actions to use less water will provide a direct, cost-effective, and appropriate response. I urge Ecology to prioritize efforts to reduce water consumption, both residential and agricultural. I also urge Ecology to not increase exemptions for unregulated and unmetered withdrawal, via private wells or any other means. The 500 gallon per day "exempt" limit is already high, and should probably be lowered if anything. Houses can, and should, get by on less water.

Conservation is critically important, because both people, farms, and fish all rely on Nooksack water. The rights of fish and the Tribes comes first, of course, under the law; and I would say that farms are next in line. Residential uses in farmland and rural areas (especially in the form of low density sprawl) is a problem. We need to minimize this competing use for water, not accommodate it. Every housing development means one less farm can hope to secure water rights. Please prioritize existing agricultural uses, to the extent consistent with maintaining healthy in-stream flows.

In addition, please adopt plans and rules that reflect global climate change's local effects. The snowpack will be smaller, and spring thaw comes earlier. Summertime flows will be even lower than in the past, while wintertime precipitation is more likely to come down as rain, rather than snow, adding to higher winter river flows. This altered seasonal pattern must be considered, and adds importance to conservation efforts.

Thank you for taking my thoughts into consideration.