



State of Washington
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

South Central Region • Ellensburg District Office • 201 N. Pearl St, Ellensburg, WA 98926
Telephone: (509) 962-3421 • Fax: (509) 575-2474

April 28, 2016

Robert "Doc" Hansen, Director
Kittitas County Community Development Services
411 N. Ruby Street; Suite 2
Ellensburg, WA 98926

SUBJECT: Palomino Fields Development Agreement (P-07-31) surrounding Currier Creek – Proposal to Construct in Five Phases

Dear Mr. Hansen,

Thank you for the opportunity to review this proposal and provide comments. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) has reviewed the 2008 application materials associated with this proposal on your website, the phasing plan provided to us upon request in April 2016, and we are familiar with the property.

WDFW has worked with this landowner and several others downstream in the Reecer/Currier Watershed to improve fish habitat and restore fish passage. With cooperation of this landowner and others, we now have coho salmon and steelhead spawning and rearing in the watershed and juvenile spring chinook rear in the system as well. We are unaware of any fish passage barriers between this site and the Yakima River for Currier and Reecer Creeks.

The 2008 SEPA mentions a stream habitat enhancement plan through this reach; we welcome the idea of implementing the project (or a similar project) for which 50% designs currently exist to improve instream habitat through this reach. These types of projects are most easily implemented prior to development and if the riparian buffer is in shared open space, rather than multiple private owners. WDFW is interested in exploring the potential to further improve habitat in Currier Creek on this property with the owners.

We encourage the applicants to work with WDFW as early as possible to make plans for the stream crossings over Currier Creek on Bender/Road E and Bowers Roads. These stream crossings, any trail crossings, and any other work that will impact the bed or flow of Currier Creek will require a Hydraulic Project Approval from WDFW. The Hearing Examiners findings note that concurrence from WDFW is a requirement for final plat approval.

We do not have detailed phasing plans for this project, but our interest is in ensuring the fish and wildlife habitat associated with Currier Creek is incorporated into the planning/phasing and that the creek, its buffer, and the floodplain are protected to the greatest extent possible. As such, we have the following recommendations for inclusion in Phase 1 to protect fish and wildlife habitat:

- All utilities, including septic plans, should be properly laid out and planned in Phase 1.
- The four wetlands referred to in the 2008 Hearing Examiner's findings should be clearly identified on the plans along with their buffers to ensure their protection.

- The 100 foot buffer from the top of bank on each side of Currier Creek should be clearly identified on all plans and in the field to ensure its protection and to prevent encroachment into the buffer.
- The riparian management plan that incorporates signage for Currier Creek referenced in the Hearings Examiner's findings should be complete and reviewed by WDFW. Implementation of this plan should occur in the first phase of development.
- All drainage features for stormwater and flood water should be planned and installed as part of Phase 1. The aerial photos in the attachment demonstrate that much of this development is within an active floodplain.
- All stream crossings (roads and trails) will require HPAs from WDFW and should be planned early in Phase 1 to ensure ease of constructability as well as provide the ability to construct adequately sized structures without impacting existing structures/infrastructure.
- We note that most of the parks are located within the 100 foot buffer for Currier Creek. Please provide plans for these parks, demonstrating that the functions of the buffer will not be impacted by development or actions in the parks.

Please feel free to contact me at (509) 962-3421 or Jennifer.nelson@dfw.wa.gov if you have any questions about these comments. I welcome the opportunity to meet with the proponents and/or the County staff to explore alternatives to minimize impacts to fish, wildlife, and their habitat.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jennifer Nelson".

Jennifer Nelson
Area Habitat Biologist

Enclosure: Aerial photos of site