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WILL WE LOSE OUR YOUNG ANGLERS?

What can be done in King County today to interest, educate, and involve anglers of tomorrow?

We—Mt. Si Fish & Game Club—are very concerned that the next generation of fishermen may be lost, due to increased private land, decreased access to publicly-owned lakes, ponds and streams, and ever-tightening regulations that create difficult blocks. All these things can discourage a youthful fisherman from walking, or riding a bike, to a spot they can fish. We would like to see today's boys and girls have the opportunities to enjoy what we had in our early years.

What is King County doing now in planning, projects under discussion, and regulations considerations that can help solve this problem we perceive? We believe that all of us...County, clubs, land stewards, and parents, should **encourage, not discourage**, this wholesome, healthy pursuit.

Mt. Si Fish & Game has for the past 68 years had an annual event called "Kids' Trout Derby" in which parents or older siblings may assist in casting, but youngsters must hook, play, and bring to hand or net their catches from pond or creek. We have sent girls and boys to summer camps to learn outdoor skills, and have established approved scholarships for local youths interested in fish biology studies. This year we will start giving mini-clinics on selecting and using tackle for different types of fishing, how to tie knots, proper bait and lure use and will mentor parents and/or older helpers with "how-to hints" to aid their young fisherpersons.

Immediately needed today are **PLACES** to give tomorrow's anglers opportunities where they can practice and use fishing skills. This is particularly acute in the Snoqualmie Valley area, and we would like to see regulations revised to re-open fishing in beaver ponds, oxbows, and "pothole" casual waters and also some waters that have been claimed by elitist anglers should be opened to youngsters and lure angling. Lakes having public access, such as Rattlesnake Lake, ought to have designated "open fishing periods" so that **all** anglers, not just fly flingers, can share the waters they mutually own.

If we together cannot interest the young people of today in fishing and at the same time provide places to participate in that outdoor sport, we feel the anglers of tomorrow may not exist. This loss would have economic ripples affecting restaurants and cafes, retail stores providing outdoor clothing, footwear, fishing equipment, terminal tackle, would slash interested fisherman numbers for future guide trips, and almost certainly also reduce annual sales of fishing licenses.

However, like the movie "Field of Dreams" portrayed, we believe that *if you provide places for young anglers to fish they will come*.

We'd appreciate your response.

Mary Houser President, Mt. Si Fish & Game Club

