

WRIA 55/57 & 54 Instream Flow Work Group
December 11, 2007 Meeting

The following was provided to the work group by Hal Beecher, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife:

Spokane River Considerations

PHABSIM models lower flow habitat more accurately than high flow habitat because water is deeper at high flow and model predicts and uses mean column velocity. In 1-2 ft of water depth, mean column velocity is similar to where fish are. In 5+ ft of water, fish are probably below the mean column velocity, so when the model says the cell is too fast for fish, it may not be too fast where they are. Therefore, model is more credible that there is too little water than that there is too much water.

Native fish have survived natural flows for thousands of years. We should be very cautious about expectations of improvement (increased fish production) through flow reduction. Setting a rule and issuing perpetual water rights that would not allow recovery to previous flows would not be prudent, just risky.

Where several species and life stages coexist, all must be considered. Much like the physicians' rule, "First do no harm," we need to consider individual responses and avoid conditions that sharply reduces habitat for any one species or life stage or stream segment.