

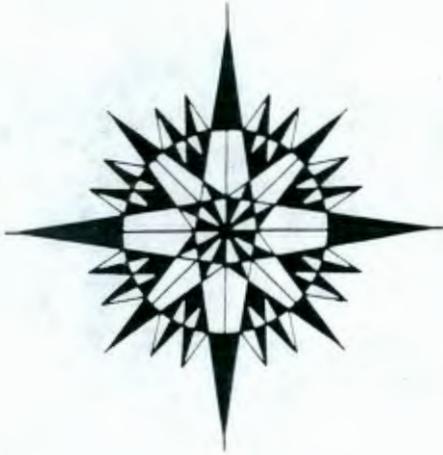
0050998 070007

Our Lady of the Snows Catholic Church

P. O. BOX 1650

SUN VALLEY, IDAHO 83353

1/208/622-3432



RECEIVED

JUN 09 1999

DOE-RL / DIS

June 2, 1999

Dear Mr. Ferns:

I am writing to you to commend you and the Department of Energy for the action you have taken in the past to protect the ecosystem of the Hanford Reach. Since moving to the Northwest I have been trying to learn all I can about the issues of the Columbia River and the breaching of the dams on the Snake River. The past action taken to protect the Hanford Reach indicates the effect action for one part of the ecosystem will have on the entire system. It is a model of what can be done for the Columbia Basin and Snake River Ecosystems.

It is my understanding that the U.S. Department of Energy, at the suggestion of local governments, is considering opening the Wahluke Slope to agriculture. It has been shown that irrigation on the Wahluke slope will cause the White Bluffs to slough into the river at a critical place where salmon spawn. This is home to the last healthy population of wild salmon in the entire Columbia River system and to many rare and endangered plant and animal species. This area is also significant for its cultural and historical sites. It must be protected so that it can be preserved for future generations.

For the sake of the entire ecosystem I urge you to designate all public lands on the Wahluke Slope, the Hanford Reach and its islands, the McGee Ranch, the Riverland area and the Arid Lands Ecology Reserve as a National Wildlife Refuge. I also encourage you to oppose grazing on the Hanford Nuclear reservation and restrict all mining operations to those essential to completing the clean-up and remediation on the Hanford Reservation.

The above mentioned areas are prime fish and wildlife habitat, as of yet uncontaminated by Hanford operations. It is important that a separate record of Decision be made for all these areas so that they do not have to wait for protection until the complex decisions involving clean-up in the central Hanford area are made.

I again want to commend the DOE for its past actions. It is action like this that will preserve our precious heritage for generations to come.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Ann Kugi, O.P.

Elizabeth Ann Kugi, O.P.
Pastoral Associate