

BRIEFING PAPER
SKAGIT ENVIRONMENTAL ENDOWMENT COMMISSION
2011 BUDGET

- The Commission was established by treaty between the United States and Canada as part of the settlement of the High Ross Dam controversy in 1984. Half of the Commission members are appointed by the Mayor of Seattle; the other half by the Premier of British Columbia.
- As part of the treaty, an endowment fund was created to protect the wilderness and wildlife values, and to enhance recreational opportunities, in the upper Skagit watershed above Ross Dam.
- The Treaty stipulated that Seattle and British Columbia would contribute to an endowment fund that the Commission administers. This was initially accomplished in 1985-89. The Treaty also requires Seattle City Light and BC Hydro to contribute to the fund, based on the value of certain power sales, on an annual basis.
- The endowment fund is **not** part of Seattle's annual budget, but approval of the budget by the Seattle City Council and the British Columbia Minister of Finance and Corporate Relations are required. The SEEC fiscal year begins April 1.
- In August, 2008, the Commission launched a 5-year work-planning process in collaboration with its public agency and non-governmental partners. The Commission continues to organize its work around initiatives for education, ecosystem management, land management, and recreation.
- The 2011-12 budget also reflects these categories with funds for education (\$219,839), ecosystem management (\$135,343), recreation (\$65,000), and land management (\$19,946).
- The Commission budgets a modest contingency fund to account for unforeseen needs and opportunities. Also, the Commission continues to set-aside \$1,000,000 in contingent appropriation for two specific purposes. First is authority to move unprotected areas of the Upper Skagit Watershed in British Columbia into protected status. The second is targeted support for grizzly bear recovery in the upper Skagit area, should opportunities arise.
- The Commission is mindful of volatility in the financial markets. The fund is professionally managed and has rebounded from recent downturns very well. The Commission gauges its expenditure rate on a multi-year perspective and will continue to monitor the fund for needed budget adjustments in future years.