Additional Gold Creek Valley Restoration EA Comment

September 16, 2024

I have previously made comments where the Gold Creek Pond and Heli’s pond has no to minimal impact on the flows of Gold Creek. This comment supplements the previous comments I have made on the EA.

As shown in the photo I have provided to the Forest Service dated August 16, 1936, Gold Creek was dry. Also, as mentioned the photo was taken over 30 years before the borrow pit excavation took place. The creek is dry most years in late summer due to the fact it is a losing stream, conditions in the stream have only gotten worse due to the effects of climate change. The other impact on the stream running dry is a result of the drawdown of the Keechelus Reservoir. In the spring the backwater of the reservoir extends up Gold Creek, north of the Forest Service road to about 1/3 mile south of Gold Creek Pond, then the drawdown of the reservoir begins. The effects of reservoir drawdown had an influence on the lower reach of Gold Creek running dry in 1936. The EA has not addressed this in the EA, in addition to not addressing the effects of climate change on the preferred alternative.

The problem with Gold Creek isn’t due to the ponds. The drawdown cone of Gold Creek does not extend to Gold Creek, and as I have mentioned, if there is any influence of Gold Creek Pond on the stream it can be addressed by raising the pond elevation. The fact that on observation along the north shore of Gold Creek Pond there isn’t widespread seepage along the bank which indicates that the pond is near equilibrium with the groundwater table. The only seepage is at the northeast corner and is due to a perched water table. In conclusion, with the significant impacts of the preferred alternative, the correct environmental document is an EIS. Furthermore, the document needs to clearly analyze the entire system. The losing stream condition, climate change (since any solution is going to lose ground and not solve the dry condition in the stream) and the effect of the reservoir drawdown on Gold Creek flows. Finally, any solution needs to clearly state, i.e. quantify the benefit of a proposal. The current preferred alternative does not improve conditions in the stream when climate change is considered and the fact that the ponds are not causing the stream to run dry.

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