Oct 30, 2025

Kelsey Jolley
Spirit Lake NEPA Coordinator
987 McClellan Road
Vancouver, WA 98661

RE: Spirit Lake Outflow Safety Improvement Project Draft Environmental Impact Statement

Dear Ms. Jolley,

For the past 25 years I have lived in the shadow of Mount Saint Helens and have frequently visited its National Volcanic Monument. I have had the opportunity to see how the 1980 eruption reshaped the landscape and created an extremely unique ecosystem. Through my current studies in natural resources and countless days spent outdoors, I have learned how important it is to protect these unique ecosystems and allow future generations to learn from them in their natural state.

I support Alternative 2 (Full Repair and Rehabilitation of the Existing Tunnel with Increased Lake Storage Capacity) because it is the only option that abides by the Mount Saint Helens National Volcanic Monument Act, preserves the scientific value of the lake and surrounding area, and ensures public safety. Section 4 of the Monument Act states that "undue modification of the natural conditions" shall be prevented[1] and Alternative 2 follows this by reusing the existing tunnel and confining construction to previously impacted areas. A majority of the other alternatives would permanently scar the Pumice Plain with roads, borrow pits, and excavated channels.[2]

Alternative 2 also specifically protects long-term research sites that are essential to our understanding of the Mount Saint Helens ecosystem. Alternative 2 "limits loss of long-term research by following the path of the existing temporary Truman Trail Road," whereas the other alternatives that include channel excavation or artificial lake-level changes could flood research sites and erase decades of data.[3]

Additionally, Alternative 2 ensures public safety through reliable controlled outflow from Spirit Lake, while preventing devastating sediment delivery into the North Fork Toutle River. The No Action option could lead to lake breaches which could cause catastrophic flooding and mudflows into the river and downstream communities. Alternative 2 requires minimal

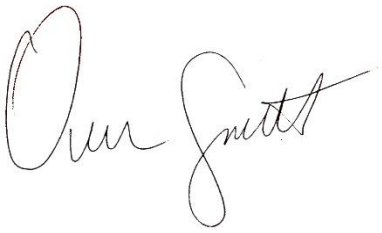
[1] Public Law 97-243—AUG. 26, 1982 https://www.congress.gov/97/statute/STATUTE-96/STATUTE-96-Pg301.pdf
[2] Draft Environmental Impact Statement (page v)
[3] Draft Environmental Impact Statement (page 239)

construction-related erosion, whereas the other alternatives could generate chronic sedimentation.

While I fully support salmon recovery across the Pacific Northwest, the Sediment Retention System (SRS) on the North Fork Toutle River already blocks upstream fish passage, with no anadromous fish documented above it since 1989.[4] The eruption has created a unique ecosystem that is not dependent on prior fish communities and should be preserved without undue human interference. While your Draft Environmental Impact Statement identifies fish passage as an issue, passage through the SRS should be addressed before any fish passage modifications are considered.

In conclusion, I am in full support of Alternative 2 as it allows for public safety issues to be addressed while maximizing preservation of the unique ecosystem. Please select Alternative 2 and let future generations hike past a lake that is held safe by quiet, hidden infrastructure. Thank you for the opportunity to provide my input and please add me as a party of record.

Respectfully,



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[4] Evaluation of the Behavior and Movement Patterns of Adult Coho Salmon and Steelhead in the North Fork Toutle River (page 9) https://pubs.usgs.gov/of/2013/1290/pdf/ofr2013-1290.pdf