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CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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August 1, 2019

U.S. Forest Service Objection Reviewing Officer

Re: Support for the US Forest Service Regional Aquatic Restoration Project Dear Objection Reviewing Officer,

The Hood River Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) would like to express its support for the Regional Aquatic Restoration project proposed to expedite the pace of aquatic restoration by the Forest Service within our region.

The Hood River SWCD provides educational, technical, and financial assistance to our community for the protection, conservation and restoration of natural resources. In this capacity we have worked with the US Forest Service to implement a number of projects to protect and restore natural resources on the National Forest. Recent activities have included instream habitat restoration on federally owned lands in the West Fork Hood River sub-basin. We also look forward to working with the Forest Service on similar projects in the Middle Fork and East Fork Hood River Sub-basins.

The Hood River Watershed has a high diversity of anadromous and resident fish species, including ESA listed winter and summer steelhead, spring and fall Chinook, coho, and bull trout.

Significantly, over half of the watershed is within the Mt. Hood National Forest, including most of the suitable spawning habitat for these species. Projects to improve water quality, stream flows, and instream habitat complexity are the key actions we are taking to improve conditions for these listed fish populations. Critical to the successful implementation of instream habitat projects on Forest Service land is a streamlined environmental review and permitting process in order to implement projects at the pace and scale that is necessary to facilitate population recovery. The process proposed for the Regional Aquatic Restoration project is a reasonable and efficient approach to addressing the backlog of restoration needs in the region. The Hood River SWCD fully supports this effort to get more aquatic habitat projects on the ground as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Brian Nakamura, Chair,

Hood River SWCD