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Organization: Central Cascades Recreation Association

Title:

Comments: Central Cascades Recreation Association ADA Committee May 2, 2024

Scott Robinson, District Ranger

Cle Elum Ranger District, Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest

c/o Patty Garvey-Darda, Project Lead 803 West 2nd Street

Cle Elum, WA 98922

Submitted to: <https://cara.fs2c.usda.gov/Public/CommentInput?Project=57415>

Subject: Gold Creek Valley Restoration Project, Draft EA Comments District Ranger Robinson:

Central Cascades Recreation Association is a 501c3 organization formed to support recreational groups and work with them on issues and endeavors that affect their members. We gladly work with outdoor organizations, land managers, and State Parks to find and support solutions that take multiple concerns into consideration.

While we support the need and purpose of the Gold Creek project, CCRA is concerned that neither recreation organizations nor nearby residential communities (Snoqualmie, Alpental) were included in the planning process. We would like to think that repairing and protecting natural areas[mdash]as well as supporting wildlife movement[mdash]is not mutually exclusive to the interests of people who recreate or live in those areas.

1. Last summer the Snoqualmie Nordic Club brought a funding proposal to the WRAC to groom the boat launch road (FS 9070-219) for cross-country skiing. The Club hoped to bring back its popular Jenteloppet Race, which originally took place on that road. The road has been groomed infrequently in the past few years, mostly because of Covid and the need to file paperwork each year. But when it is, that section of trail is very popular at Hyak Sno-Park because it offers some elevation gain and loss in an otherwise flat landscape and brings skiers closer to the lake. It[rsquo]s enjoyed by all, including the para- nordic skiers who train there with Outdoors for All. The WRAC representatives were enthusiastic and supportive of the proposal.

We were surprised to read in the Plan that winter grooming of this paved road would no longer be allowed.

"There would continue to be no winter plowing or grooming on Forest Service Road 9070-219 below the access road to the Washington State Parks Hyak trailhead/sno-park."

We can understand why that road will be gated and monitored in summer because of motorized vandalism to the lake bed. But what does that have to do with nonmotorized winter recreation? Unrelated decisions such as this one, in a Plan intended to repair decades of damage in a sensitive area, give the impression that the Cle Elem Ranger District is unfriendly to winter recreation. Please remove this unnecessary closure from the Gold Creek Plan.

1. The Cle Elem office is well aware of the parking and overuse issues at all the Sno-Parks and recreation areas through the Snoqualmie Pass corridor. And, as we have been approached by para-nordic skiers who want to ski

on the trails, we've realized that not all of the Sno-Parks are ADA compliant. Cabin Creek is the worst. How is a para-nordic skier supposed to get out of her car and across the freeway to the trailhead?

We understand Okanogan-Wenatchee FS owns the parking lot on the north side of exit 62 that WSDOT is using seasonally for freeway construction and that WSDOT has a special-use permit. That lot is ideally suited for ADA access and would also accommodate many of the people who drive to Cabin Creek for youth programs and recreation who cannot find space at the other two lots. This parking lot backs up to the Cabin Creek trail system; the groomer used to park there and drive through a connecting trail to groom the system. Arranging Sno-Park use of this lot would help ease pressure in the Snoqualmie corridor because of the Gold Creek closures.

People and organizations all over this state work out arrangements between government and municipal entities and recreation groups. We've been really surprised that of all the people we've talked with, only the Cle Elem office has refused to meet to discuss this parking lot and the need for ADA access at Cabin Creek. Please work with us to provide ADA access for Cabin Creek and additional parking at exit 62.

We're very aware that you are understaffed and underfunded. But we also wonder that this seems to be an office that can only "do" wildlife and avoids any changes or discussion when it's a matter of recreation. We want to change this dynamic. We believe that it can be rewarding and productive to work together.

Please consider our requests. Meet with us to discuss how we can work together.

Best regards,

Joy Cordell, Central Cascades Recreation Association ADA Committee Shelly Nance, Outdoors for All Ski Coach

Steve Ellis, Outdoors for All Ski Instructor

Nate Higgs, Para-Nordic Skier, Outdoors for All Ski Instructor Erin Martin, Para-Nordic Skier, Para-Olympian

Jeff Clark

Supporting organizations Ski for Light, Seattle

Washington Ski Touring Club Cascade Backcountry Alliance

CC: Corey Tolar, Winter Recreation Program Manager, WA

WRAC Representatives: Jim Rhodes, Peter Valaas, Michael Burns, Emilie Blevens, John Baronowski, Glenn Warren