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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Draft EA. I support the Gold Creek Restoration Project because I expect it to benefit the Gold Creek Valley ecosystem, its riparian environments, and the wildlife corridors and passages under and over I-90. This area was historically part of the Yakama Nation, and should be treated with respect in light of its human and ecological history. I am thankful to everyone who has worked on the project for these many years, including the Yakama Nation, KCT, the US Forest Service, WDFW, NSD, and many others.

My family has property in the STVMA community close to the instream project. We built a cabin not far from Gold Creek starting in 2002. We have seen Gold Creek in high water, low water, no water, as a trickle and as a powerful river. During those 24 years, the creek bed has migrated from side to side, widening noticeably into gravel banks, taking out trees along the bank, and leaving stretches of Gold Creek exposed to bright sun with no shade and not much vegetative or channel complexity.

I make the following comments on the Draft EA, mostly centered on the instream project:

1. Creek Widening, and the Engineering: Stabilization of Gold Creek and the installation of the ELJ and other structures in the stream bed will enhance riparian areas and support the environment. I appreciate the high level of design and engineering from well-respected and experienced engineers, hydrologists and other specialists.

Long term monitoring of the instream portion of the project should be funded as a necessary part of the overall project.

2. Work Initiation. I would like to see the instream restoration start as soon as possible. If the workers and project managers and STVMA community were agreeable, I would support 7-day work weeks with long daytime work hours to save project costs, and get the done work faster, perhaps even within one season. Certainly, the project will cause noise, dust, and vibration in the area of the cabins near the creek, but these inconveniences will soon be over, and in any case, they are outweighed by the long-term benefits to the ecosystem and Bull Trout.

3. Vegetation: The replanting along Gold Creek is important, and should come with a sufficient budget and planning to keep the plants alive until their roots can grow and establish themselves in ground water.

Some local residents may be willing to volunteer time to water the plants. Sufficient planning and thought must go into the necessary water allocation and equipment resources.

4. STVMA Gate: I support maintaining the current placement of the gate on USFS land as beneficial to the project because it protects the contractors' equipment and material, and other private property. I understand the need to add an additional gate. There must be active management of the gates to keep them locked when not being used.

Additionally, the project will need to take over management of the Forest Service road beyond the gate (currently maintained by STVMA by agreement with the USFS), at least during the project years.

5. Restricting Access: Unfortunately, access onto Gold Creek Road from the frontage road (4832) will be blocked during the project. However, I appreciate the need to block the road when heavy project equipment is or may be using it. The 5 or 10 years of construction will pass quickly, and the larger environment project will be enhanced for many decades and longer. Keeping the public safe from trucks and active construction is a necessary and temporary precaution.

As for the winter, I support some public access along Gold Creek Road, although perhaps not beyond a certain area (to preserve any materials stockpiled, for example), or perhaps with fences to protect material and minimize liability. When there is deep snow, it will be almost impossible to allow access to some individuals but not others.

6. Preserving Access to Cabin Owners. I and other cabin owners appreciate and support the continued access to their property over the Forest Service roads during the project.

7. ADA trail near Gold Creek Pond. The Draft EA includes in-kind replacement of the existing ADA accessible trail. The current trail around Gold Creek Pond is paved, and the replacement trail should also be paved. That trail is currently one of the only paved ADA trails along I-90, with beautiful views of the Cascade Mountains. Public users in wheelchairs and walkers need pavement because a dirt trail with rocks and uneven terrain can be impassable.

8. Maintenance Inside STVMA: Because the project will likely use trucks along Chikamin Peak Road through STVMA to the Heli's Pond area and above, the project should of course bear the cost of repairing any resulting damage.

9. Communication. It will be important that clear details describing heavy truck traffic through STVMA, if any, be communicated to STVMA. The project and STVMA community should have well defined communication channels with points of contact so full and free communication is fostered.

10. Barbs: An existing STVMA barbs in Gold Creek, if removed, should be replaced with equal or superior barbs or logjams.

We appreciate your consideration of these and other issues. I look forward to the project.

Respectfully,

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