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Organization: Forterra

Title: President and CEO

Comments: April 19, 2024

Responsible Official Scott Robinson, District Ranger

c/o Patty Garvey-Darda, Project Lead

Cle Elum Ranger District

803 W 2nd Street

Cle Elum, WA 98922

RE:GoldCreek ValleyRestorationProjectProposedAction

Forterra welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Gold Creek Valley Restoration Project. Forterra owns nearly 250 acres in Gold Creek Valley, including almost one mile of degraded creek frontage, and Heli's Pond. The property was purchased in 2009 with grant funding from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Section 6 program, specifically for the purpose of protecting threatened and endangered species habitat. Forterra is obligated by the USFWS grant to manage our property for the purposes of endangered species habitat.

Beyond obligation, restoration of Gold Creek aligns with Forterra's mission to support innovative approaches to solving the climate crisis. Reduced snowpack due to climate change will almost certainly lead to reduced flows in Gold Creek. Unless action is taken, the number of days per year that Gold Creek is dewatered will likely increase to the point that bull trout become extinct in this system. Restoring Gold Creek to a functional stream with associated wetlands will not eliminate adverse effects to the ecosystem caused by climate change, but it will increase ecosystem resilience and improve the long-term viability of the bull trout population.

Forterra urges the Forest Service to move forward with the Project as designed, without further delays. We believe that the Proposed Action provides the best option based on the available science. For example, hydrologic modeling has shown that Heli's Pond contributes to seasonal dewatering of Gold Creek. Forterra supports 75% filling of Heli's Pond in order to restore groundwater hydrology with maximum balance between costs and anticipated response in Gold Creek.

Forterra is committed to the conservation and restoration of Gold Creek Valley that will contribute to sustainable populations of endangered species. Bull trout in the Yakima Basin face multiple threats to their survival, especially in the face of climate change. Thus, Forterra supports the Proposed Action of the Gold Creek Valley Restoration Project to restore this stretch of bull trout habitat on and directly adjacent to our land.

Sincerely,

Michelle Connor

President and CEO

Forterra