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We are pleased to see the Environmental Assessment of the Gold Creek Valley Restoration project open for public review. WDFW has been monitoring the Gold Creek Bull Trout population since 1984 and helping develop the project since its inception. We are excited to see restored natural streamflow and enhanced instream and terrestrial habitat complexity and connectivity become a reality. This project will benefit ESA-listed Bull Trout, anadromous salmon and steelhead, imperiled wildlife, and improve flood resilience for a local community. Originating in the Alpine Lakes Wilderness, this cold-water tributary is a key location for species persistence in the face of a changing climate. This effort will restore flow to nearly two miles of stream that is subject to annual de-watering. De-watering is a cause of direct mortality to all age classes of Bull Trout and blocks upstream access to an additional three miles of Bull Trout habitat.

Fisheries agencies are poised to reintroduce salmon and steelhead above Keechelus Dam after an absence of over 100-yrs. Gold Creek is a usual and accustomed fishing location for the Yakama Nation and will be the primary spawning tributary for the restored runs of anadromous species. This project, with support from the Yakima Basin Integrated Water Resource Management Plan, is key to the success of those reintroduction efforts.

WDFW supports the USFS coming to a NEPA decision to move the proposed restoration actions forward as designed to restore viable populations of Bull Trout in Gold Creek, as well as make great strides in wildlife connectivity and the return of anadromous species.

Sincerely,

Mike Livingston

South-Central Washington Regional Director