

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 4/11/2020 7:00:00 AM

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Natural conditions on lower Gold Creek have been greatly impacted over the past 100 years. Dams, highways, logging, mining, recreation developments have all played a role. I would like to see a solution that is a win for both Bull Trout and recreation uses in the Gold Creek Pond area. The existing one-mile loop trail and parking lot were constructed over a 20 years period utilizing funds from a variety of sources to ultimately pave or boardwalk the entire loop trail and also establish a parking area, picnic site, and toilets. As anyone who quickly scans any of the hiking or scenic social media sites will see, Gold Creek Pond is prominently featured as one of the most popular and accessible viewpoints along I-90 as it passes through the Cascades. People are drawn to the dramatic views up Gold Creek valley to Chikamin Peak, Alta Mountain, and Rampart Ridge. The site is utilized year-round by recreationists. My concern is that the significant feature of this site be retained however this project is implemented. This includes a long sight line across still water feature - at least 500 feet - that aligns with a southern viewpoint and the Gold Creek Valley. Maintenance of this scenic vista is the paramount concern for recreation.

Here are a few other thoughts to consider as you proceed:

1. Keep as many of the existing facilities in their current locations as possible. Parking, toilets, and as much of the trail as possible. Maintain trail access from Gold Creek Pond to the Gold Creek Trail
2. Please salvage all material such as boardwalk decking and steel beam stringers for re-use.
3. Project Map - please show private AND State lands. Show administrative boundary between Okanogan-Wenatchee and Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie. Show major trails - Pacific Crest Trail, Gold Creek
4. Several comments in the Project Need document that should be cleared up.

* SNOTEL data appears to be selectively shown on page 4 to show a downward trend in snowpack while not also showing long term average conditions on the same graph. Snow pack at Ollalie Meadows has been ABOVE the long term average of about 48" SWE 15 of 20 years between 1998 and 2018 (last year data available.) Data presented covered the period of 1969 - 2007. Please use most recent data to make your case. I understand that snowmelt may be coming off earlier, but trying to show a decrease in average snowpack at the Ollalie Meadows SNOTEL site by skipping the most recent decade does not help your case. Graph from Ollalie Meadows SNOTEL attached.

* It is stated on page 4 that, . . . "Gold Creek relies on snow pack and glaciers to supply water during baseflow conditions in the summer ." while there are many snow patches, some of which, such as under Chikamin Peak that may be perennial, there are no glaciers in the Gold Creek basin.

* In discussing a largish avalanche that occurred in the winter of 2008, the statement is made that . . . "Such populations are at high risk of extirpation from chance events alone, such as wildfire or an ill-timed, ill-placed major landslide or avalanche." These "ill timed, ill placed" events are not "chance" but occur on a regular basis in this, and other locations, throughout the upper reaches of Gold Creek. The fish have lived with these for eons, they will persist. In Wilderness, we can do nothing to control or mitigate these events.

* On Page 6 there is a discussion of wetland loss in Washington. The claim is made that since the 1780's, 31% of the original wetlands have been lost. Who was here making the original wetland surveys 20 + years before Lewis and Clark came down the Columbia?

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

[Forest Service note: The jpg attached with this comment letter cannot be converted to text for comment coding but is accessible as a separate file for review.]

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