

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the scoping process for the Gold Creek Valley Restoration project. I have visited the Gold Creek Pond area many times over the years, picnicking with family and enjoying the view from the picnic area. Generally, I am accompanied on my visits by my brother, who is wheelchair-bound. The Gold Creek Pond area is a fantastic destination for us to go where he can wheel himself around some of the trails to get exercise, we can sit and have a nice picnic at the picnic tables, and we can look up at Chikamin Ridge at the end of the valley and reminisce about the great hiking we have done together in earlier years.

Having read through the scoping documents, I agree with the needs and actions. The bull trout (and other native fish) would greatly benefit from the proposed restoration work. My comments regarding the work and the targeted results would be as follows:

1. ADA design considerations of trails: Users of ADA trails have a wide range of needs. My personal experience is focused on a user (my brother) who is in a manual chair (ie it is not a powered wheelchair, but he propels, brakes, and steers manually). There are a number of ways that the trail can be designed to make it the most accessible for wheelchair users. Specifically:
  - a. The ADA trail should be paved, graded gently enough so that a user in a manual wheelchair can navigate the slopes independently.
  - b. Any curves should be designed along the flat part of the trail, not at the bottom or top of any slope.
  - c. The trail should not be routed close to trees, as tree roots will cause cracks and ridges in the paved surface.
  - d. The trail should not have too aggressive of a side-slope for drainage, as that is challenging for wheelchair users to navigate. Ideally, the trail should be crowned in the center for drainage so the chair can ride on the center of the trail without turning in either direction.
  - e. The distance from the parking lot to the viewpoint/picnic area should not be too far—the distance at the current Gold Creek Pond to the picnic area is just about right. Once you sit and enjoy your picnic, then an additional exploration trip might be in order, but the distance right from the car can't be too far.
2. ADA design consideration for enjoyment and esthetics: Once you get to the viewpoint and picnic area, you should be able to get some “bang for your buck”. At the current Gold Creek Pond you get that—a fantastic view up to the high country, and a nice water feature in the foreground. No one wants to go on a picnic on a sunny day only to sit in the trees and stare at a wetland. So, some suggestions:
  - a. The picnic area needs to be sited in an open area, and must maintain a clear view up the valley into the high country.
  - b. The access trail would ideally follow/bridge the creek like it currently does so users can have a chance to see the water and any fish that are congregating in there (like you currently can).
  - c. The picnic area should have ADA accessible tables that have an area that a wheelchair user can sit at (ie one of those tables that doesn't have a bench at one area so a wheelchair can slide underneath it to “sit” at the table).
  - d. A sun shelter or some trees should be nearby (but not shading the entire area) so you could sit in the shade on a hot sunny day to enjoy the view.

3. The restoration option that is chosen should be the one that hastens the improvement of the project area for bull trout recovery. The quicker the better, as it were. Also, any other actions within the bull trout area that would assist in their recovery should be implemented—reference was made to closing Keechelus to cars when the water level is drawn down, and this seems like a perfectly reasonable restriction.
4. Lastly, have there been any studies done to investigate the impacts of stormwater runoff from I-90 into Keechelus? I know that research has shown that stormwater runoff with the associated pollutants (brake dust, oils, etc) have a measurable impact on water quality. Additionally, there is quite a bit of sand, salt, and chemicals applied to the roads up at the pass that wash directly into the lake. Are there any filter channels or other water quality improvement measures that can be taken to reduce the amount of pollutants entering into Keechelus from the roadway?

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this project. I look forward to hearing more about it as the project develops.

Sincerely,

Nete Olsen