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Organization:

Title:

Comments: I'm writing in support of the Gold Creek Valley Restoration Project # 57415. My family has enjoyed hiking and skiing in Gold Creek Valley for over 20 years. We've owned property in SkiTur since 2000. Here are a few of my thoughts on the potential restoration projects.

1) I'd like to see Gold Creek stabilized and narrowed, to support more fish and other wildlife. We don't see as many elk and birds in the valley as we used to. I miss them. I'd like to see wildlife habitat increased and native plants restored around the creek. Last summer we volunteered with Fish and Wildlife to help save Bull Trout trapped as the creek dewatered. I support all efforts to keep Gold Creek flowing as much of the year as possible! It was sad to see the Bull Trout juveniles trapped in the warming pools.

2) I also support connecting Gold Creek to its western floodplain. In the early 2000's, the section of Gold Creek closest to our cabin flowed more to the west. It has since jumped and migrated in an easterly direction. I'd like to see it move back west, to connect to the wetlands on that undeveloped side.

3) I also support reconfiguring Gold Creek Pond to create more wetlands and to connect water flow to Gold Creek. Having walked Gold Creek Pond scores of times with family and friends, the area holds many fond memories for me. But I also understand the need for wildlife to have wetlands and other natural refuges, given our rapidly warming climate. Although I love Gold Creek Pond, I am also excited to see the changes that would allow more species to live there and find refuge in the new wetlands. A number of my family and friends use walkers, wheelchairs, and canes. I very much like the design's inclusion of a wide, ADA accessible trail in the reconfigured Gold Creek Pond. I prefer Plans B and C because they both include a longer ADA trail that circles throughout the current Pond area, on both sides of the wetlands. It would be wonderful to see people of all ages and physical abilities able to continue bird watching, taking photographs, painting, and observing more fish and wildlife in the reconfigured Gold Creek Pond areas. Bravo!

4) It also makes sense, in my opinion, to reconfigure the current recreational facilities, including the picnic tables, bridges, and restrooms. I'd like to see more wetlands created, Gold Creek reconnected to the wetlands, and wildlife allowed to flourish there.

5) If modifying Heli's Pond helps with the overall Gold Creek restoration, then I'm in favor of it as long as the changes don't create more flooding hazards for the cabins in the area. I believe Heli's Pond is part of a system that keeps the creek from flooding the cabins more directly. I hope any changes made will retain those protections for the cabins in the valley. I also hope any changes to the Heli's Pond area will allow for primitive trails for birdwatchers and hikers, and for observation spots where people can sit and observe wildlife.

6) Yes, a new bridge on FSR 4832 that would allow for wildlife crossings, in connection with the I-90 wildlife crossings, seems essential to me. We enjoy seeing the fish migrate from Lake Keechelus every year and I'd love to see even more fish!

7) I support protections such as prohibiting motor vehicles from driving on the lakebed and up the dewatered Gold Creek. We do see vehicles attempting to go up the dry creek bed occasionally and I believe they frighten the animals and birds. I'd like to see vehicles prohibited from the lake and creek beds.