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Comments: Trout Unlimited (TU) fully supports the restoration of Gold Creek to restore ecological integrity to the system and help restore Bull trout in the area. As a unique population, Bull trout in Gold Creek deserve every opportunity to adapt to our changing climate. The fish require access to spawning and rearing grounds currently inaccessible due to past land use actions. A "no action" alternative, which fails to correct any issues, is a step toward extirpation of the Gold Creek Bull trout and should be considered non-viable.

The project documentation suggests implementation will take significant time and will vary based on funding availability. As such, TU recommends that USFS make a NEPA determination and support/begin implementation at the earliest possible time to improve conditions for Bull trout and other Gold Creek fish and wildlife. Among the actions that should be a high priority are filling the ponds (and associated forest wetland restoration), which should reduce habitat suitable for non-native fish while improving system hydrology that will improve Gold Creek conditions for native fishes.

Further, TU understands that public access is an important issue and a key part of national forest lands. However, TU does not support unfettered vehicular access to sensitive areas like the bed of Keechelus Lake and Gold Creek. TU strongly encourages you to specifically address vehicle access to sensitive areas and implement management practices consistent with modern fish conservation practices.

Please make a NEPA determination in a timely manner to advance the restoration of Gold Creek and recover Bull trout to help maintain the ecological integrity of the Yakima Basin.