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First name: James

Last name: Evans

Organization:

Title:

Comments: NEED FOR RESTORATION

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this EA. I'm a semi-retired conservation biologist with experience in ecological restoration and project management. I've been a cabin owner in Gold Creek Valley since 2000.

During this time I've witnessed the annual dewatering of Gold Creek and I am extremely concerned about the devastating effect this has on both the aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems in the valley, and on the function of the valley as an important wildlife migration corridor. Over the last decade I've learned a great deal about the history of logging and gravel mining in Gold Creek Valley and I appreciate the science that has illuminated the effects of these practices on the hydrology of the creek. I expect the Gold Creek Restoration Project to have enormous benefits for the entire Gold Creek Valley ecosystem and to enhance the value of the Valley's wildlife corridor and I-90 wildlife passages. I'm grateful to the US Forest Service, WDFW, and the Yakama Nation for developing and promoting this plan.

#### RESEARCH AND DESIGN CONTRACTOR

I'm familiar with some of Natural Systems Design's projects and the firm's earned reputation as one of the best restoration design firms in the country. I'm confident that their design, if properly installed and maintained, will achieve project objectives as much as is possible, and I applaud the project partners for engaging a firm of NSD's stature for the research and design of this project.

#### MONITORING AND REPAIRS

I very much want to see the Gold Creek Restoration Project succeed, both for bull trout as well as for the entire valley ecosystem. While I have confidence in NSD and the project design, nature is complex and it is the human experience that things don't always go as planned. I appreciate that the EA indicates there will be a 10-year monitoring period following project installation. I would like to know: if problems such as structural failures or excessive vegetation mortality are observed or if the project doesn't perform as needed, who will be responsible for addressing the issues? How will repairs be managed, generally, and how will they be funded?

#### POST-PLANTING CARE

As a professional, I have seen revegetation projects underperform or outright fail due to inadequate post-planting care. I'd like to know if project sponsors plan a robust vegetation maintenance program that includes adequate watering for at least the first growing season after installation and invasive plant management for as long as necessary to allow new plantings to establish. How will these contingencies be planned for and budgeted for?

#### CONSTRUCTION OVERSIGHT

I've seen contractors depart from engineering designs either from failure to accurately interpret designs or from cost or deadline pressures. Consistent on-site oversight by the design/engineering firm is often necessary to ensure that project elements are installed as intended. Will this be part of the project, and, if so, how will this oversight be accomplished?

#### RECREATION MANAGEMENT AND LANDOWNER ACCESS

This is an ambitious long-term project that I expect will affect my family's use and enjoyment of our cabin and I willingly accept unavoidable inconveniences associated with the project in favor of the long-term benefits to the ecosystem the project will provide. That said, I have a few concerns about access to the valley. Having seen public parking at Gold Creek Pond overflow to the access road, gate area, and beyond at peak usage times, I'm concerned about how closure of the Gold Creek Pond area will affect public use and traffic congestion along the access road. How will this be managed and how will access to cabins and general access to the upper valley be accommodated during this closure? I would like to see a plan that addresses this.

I wish to see a fully restored and vibrant Gold Creek Valley. My greatest concern is that implementation of the Gold Creek Restoration Project will be delayed by misinformation and/or inadequate funding. I wish the partners all success in the timely accomplishment of all project goals.