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Organization:

Title:

Comments: I, like many of my neighbors, am an enthusiastic supporter of the project to restore Gold Creek and the historic wetlands at the sites of Gold Creek Pond and Heli's Pond. It's a mature and reasonable society that acknowledges its mistakes and seeks to repair the damage from those mistakes. An enormous thank you to Mitch Long/Kittitas Conservation Trust (KCT), the Forest Service (FS), the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, and the many private and government agencies that have worked together for years to bring this project to fruition.

I am one of the cabin owners in the Ski Tur Community. While my mailing address is in Bend, Oregon, I am fully invested in the future of Gold Creek and the wildlife and recreation it supports.

I do have questions and am eager to more fully understand the plan and implications:

SnoPark/trail closure:

The EA says access to Gold Creek trail may be closed for 5-10 years. Therefore, the SnoPark will not be maintained

at the junction of FS 4832 and the gravel road (FS 4832-142/144). There will be no portable toilets. But if history is a good predictor, people will still come. And pee and poop. And leave their trash at the trailhead.

How will the closure be enforced? Will it be enforced?

How would winter enforcement be different from non-snowy seasons?

What can be done to prevent/discourage access and littering?

Will FS 4832 continue to be plowed to the junction with

FS 4832-

142/144 in the winter? Will a berm still be installed to discourage driving up

FS 4832-

142/144? (And to save the inevitable poor fools from having to get their vehicles towed out of the valley?)

I would like to know more about Forest Service (FS) plans to inform the public about alternative trails and SnoParks.

Project publicity:

We've already encountered frequent users who know nothing of the restoration plans and closures.

How will traffic be diverted from driving down FS 4832, preventing hopeful recreators from driving to

FS 4832-

142/144, only to realize they need to turn around? (Or, again, inevitably, decide "Well I'm already here. What's the chance I'll get caught/ticketed if I park and go for a hike/snowshoe?")

What public education efforts are planned?

What lessons could be applied from the closure of the Snow Lake trailhead just down the street a few years ago?

FS presence:

Similarly, how would the presence of the FS around Gold Creek Pond and up the trail change during the closure?

For example, in past years, FS workers showed up to clean up (two truckloads of trash) after July 4th. If people show up and leave their diapers, toilet paper, plates and utensils, flags, etc., what will be done to make sure that is cleaned up?

In-stream restoration/revegetation:

In a meeting with KCT, Patty Garvey-Darda (Forest Service) and the Ski Tur Valley community, Mitch Long (KCT) noted that ~35,000 plants would be planted along Gold Creek to vegetate the creek banks and the log jams after they are installed. I'd like to better understand:

What will be done to ensure the plants survive and who will do the work?

Will plants be watered/maintained in that important first year or two?

Will they be planted with protective screening or something else to protect from wildlife? What happens to the screening?

What's the expected survival rate for the plants?

How can community members help?

Post-construction monitoring:

The EA says there will be a 10-year monitoring program of the instream work. Fabulous! I'd like to know more:

If there are any structural failures with any of those log jams, or they don't perform as expected, what are the criteria to decide when and how they should be repaired?

Who will make these repairs and how will that happen?

Assuming work would need to be done when Gold Creek flow is lower/slower, could any mitigating work be done while the creek is still full to prevent flooding of Ski Tur properties, should that be a risk?

If you have any experience with this or knowledge of projects where failures required a response, I would like to know about the process.

Protecting wildlife and environment during construction:

The EIS acknowledges that Bull Trout will be killed in the process of executing the project, but doesn't address Kokanee present in Gold Creek Pond every autumn.

What is planned to mitigate Bull Trout and Kokanee deaths?

As the creek and wetland restoration work will be in a wildlife corridor, what are the plans to maintain animal passage during the work, particularly while heavy machinery is being used?

The impact statement acknowledges emissions produced from heavy machinery will be significant. I would like to know more about real and effective mitigation plans for the in-stream project.

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