

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 5/1/2024 7:00:00 AM

First name: Brad

Last name: Colman

Organization:

Title:

Comments: 1 May 2024

Wenatchee National Forest

Responsible Official Scott Robinson, District Ranger

c/o Patty Garvey-Darda, Project Lead

Cle Elum Ranger District

803 West 2nd Street

Cle Elum, WA 98922

[Submitted to: <https://cara.fs2c.usda.gov/Public/CommentInput?Project=57415>]

Subject: Comments on Gold Creek Valley Restoration Project, Draft EA

Dear Patty Garvey-Darda,

As a private resident in the valley, and speaking only on my behalf, I want to first express my appreciation for the careful analyses that have gone into this effort and share my belief that the involved experts have done their due diligence through the design process. The careful in situ monitoring and use of state-of-the-science hydrologic modeling to better understand impacts on both low and high flows is greatly appreciated and elevates confidence in the plan. For example, the plan to push flood waters to the western floodplain is excellent and not only environmentally helpful but logically helpful in mitigating local resident's exposure to flood risks. Thank you!

I do have a few additional concerns and thoughts to share as well:

1. The scope and duration of the project has grown from earlier descriptions (at least that is my impression). As the duration grows, impacts that could be tolerated for a year or two, become much less tolerable at five or more years. As such, I encourage the design team to take this into consideration in your decision making and approach. Once the project is underway please do everything possible to complete the work as efficiently as possible (e.g., including possibly working seven days a week and providing incentives for early completion.) To the extent possible, having a guarantee of sufficient funds to invest heavily into the right equipment and approaches without cutting corners, would also prevent slowdowns in progress. Efforts to shorten impacts on residents and visitors would also benefit bull trout and the general environment.

2. Anticipating heavy gravel-road usage in the project area, and within cabin communities, I worry about dust. Large heavy trucks are not known for their patience and/or respect of 15 mph speed limits and are prone to stirring up tremendous plumes of dust. In addition, many years of traffic on these roads has likely resulted in environmentally unhealthy chemicals and materials being deposited. Could you please articulate what demands and requirements (e.g., frequent watering of the road surface) you will place on the contracting businesses to minimize the risk and impact of dust on both residents and the environment.

3. Ensuring the selection and placement of engineered log jams during the instream project is done in a way that optimizes the environmental impacts is paramount. Yet, as the detailed design decisions are made I respectfully ask that the design team additionally consider recreational usage along the streambank, especially in areas adjacent to cabins.

4. The planned closure for winter recreation is highly troublesome for several reasons. First, the displacement of the literally hundreds of Gold Creek Sno Park users each day to other locations (that are already, themselves, beyond capacity) will lead to: (a) considerable public frustration and loss of community support for the project, (b) the likely result of environmental damage to near-road areas accessible from non-authorized parking spots where users are "making do" to find any location for some winter fun, and (c) unnecessary visitor exposure to risks and hazards in unknown and uncontrolled areas (e.g., avalanches etc.). The project would benefit from taking a more holistic approach and consideration beyond the boundaries of the project in making this decision.

5. As a local resident, I certainly appreciate that the plan supports our rightful access to private property. Yet, this will likely be fraught with challenges. The displaced and frustrated recreationists mentioned above will not be easily deterred. Some will figure out ways to access this popular and well known area. You indicated in your meeting with STVMA residents that you will need to plan for these people (which will require your crews to carefully close down work staging areas, etc., at the end of the construction season). As such, why not just plan for allowed winter access? Areas with unacceptable hazards can be closed off. This would also solve another likely problem: local residents will be continually put in awkward and possibly dangerous situations as they get quizzed and challenged as to why they are able to enter the closed areas. It is difficult to imagine that the project will maintain any winter-season defensible presence at these access points to enforce the policy, which will place unnecessary hardship on the local residents. If providing winter access really isn't possible, the community would benefit from an explanation with explicit details as to why it isn't possible, and a detailed description of the winter-

season management plan. This decision could easily become the project's achilles heel.

6. I appreciate the project's goal of managing and limiting growth of recreational users after the project is complete. The idea of installing a "pay gate" at the entrance intersection is interesting and assuming the technical and design challenges can be overcome it has appeal. Please be sure to put in place the following: (a) sufficient access that lines to go through the pay gate don't become unreasonably long. Residents would find it unacceptable to wait times that exceed 15 minutes to reach their summer residences. (b) Sufficient support that if the pay gate becomes broken that residents are not 'locked out or in' for any unreasonable length of time. Finally, I want to request that as these final details are worked out on access and public usage after the project that consideration be given to paving the publicly accessible road to the pond visitor and parking area. Today's usage is heavy enough that this section of the gravel road is often extremely difficult to maneuver, hazardous, and, at times, dangerous, and a challenge to maintain. If paved, the quality of the visitor experience would be greatly enhanced and the demands of ongoing maintenance would be minimized.

Thank you for considering these concerns. I look forward to receiving your reply.

Respectfully, Brad Colman