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Comments: Snoqualmie Pass Fire & Rescue (SPFR) is at this point, opposed to the filling of Gold Creek Pond and Helis Pond. We view these as important water sources for fire suppression. We have pumps that can be deployed in Helis pond that can fill trucks with water for fire suppression. Without these water sources SPFR will have to truck water in from the municipal water system at Snoqualmie Pass, potentially causing delays in fire suppression efforts. Snoqualmie Pass Fire & Rescue Professional Firefighters and Volunteer Firefighters are the primary fire suppression personnel for private property in the communities of Gold Creek. The USFS has not contacted, nor met with the Fire District to discuss the impacts of us losing these water sources, additionally the USFS has not discussed alternatives with the Fire District.

Firefighting aviation resources are crucial in the early stages of wildfire development. Keeping new fires small and manageable so ground resources can access and gain control before they get so large and become too dangerous for ground forces to fight. We view the Gold Creek Pond as an important water source for helicopters to dip by reducing the turnaround time it takes that resources to fly to Lake Keechelus. We have discussed this with our firefighting partners, USFS and DNR firefighting managers and they agree with Snoqualmie Pass Fire & Rescue's position on this. The private communities of Gold Creek have only one ingress and egress access point and do not have enough water in their domestic water system to support fire suppression efforts. If wildfire gets established in the gold creek valley it could be difficult to extinguish and could have significant impacts to the communities of Snoqualmie Pass and the I90 corridor. We learned from the Bolt Creek Fire that US HWY 2 closed for several weeks. A closure of I90 from wildfire would be a significant burden on the State of Washington's economy given that it sees billions of dollars of freight and is likely the busiest mountain pass in the United States. We believe there could be alternatives to the water sources in Gold Creek Valley but we have not had the opportunity to meet and discuss these issues with the USFS.

SPFR opposes closures to public land. We agree with why the temporary closure occurred at Lake Keechelus last summer (2023). SPFR does not support the destruction of natural resources and we support the restoration of bull trout and wildlife habitat. We believe there are better alternatives that allow for recreational opportunities including disabled Americans. However there has been no opportunities for citizens to discuss these alternatives with the USFS.

Snoqualmie Pass sees hundreds of thousands recreational visitors annually. There is a significant deficiency in the amount of access to the national forest and this creates a tremendous problem for the private property owners, citizens of Snoqualmie Pass and the many recreators that visit the area. For example, last summer when the Lake Keechelus closure occurred, several hundred recreators moved to lake Kachess. That area, which is already at max capacity on weekends, started seeing vehicles lining up the Lake Kachess road by parking on the shoulders and on private property. This was problematic because we could not access areas of lake kachess with emergency vehicles. The public was accessing the shores of Lake Kachess through private property. There were several reports of trespassing and human waste due to the lack of resources in the area.

Another example: Last summer the USFS closed the Franklin Falls, Denny Creek trailheads for most of the 2023 summer to build a parking lot. This worked occurred on weekdays, however the trails remained closed on the weekends, even though no construction occurring. Unfortunately, that's when most visitation occurs. Due to this closure the Snow Lake Trailhead became increasingly over crowded. The bathroom facility at the trailhead became difficult to service and the USFS closed it. Human waste was everywhere on the national forest and on private property. The access road which travels through the community of Snoqualmie Pass was packed with cars to the extent SPFR could not get fire suppression resources to properties and businesses in the fire district.

SPFR believes there are alternatives to the Gold Creek Restoration project that would accomplish the goals of bull trout and wildlife habitat while continuing to allow for recreation that spreads thousands of people out, creates better access opportunities, provides rules to prevent the destruction of habitat and lessens the impact to people who live, own property here, and recreate at Snoqualmie Pass. We believe that there needs to be a better access plan for Lake Keechelus by establishing barriers to keep people out of the reservoir bed when it draws down but still allows for recreation year-round without having to walk from the Palouse to Cascades State Park. This area is an important place for our community, giving us a beach with a lake in our back yards that can be accessed and enjoyed even when the lake is very low. We are aware that there are other reservoir systems that allow for "dawn to dusk" type access and we would like to discuss what we have discovered with the USFS.

SPFR and the Communities of Snoqualmie Pass have not been included in discussions of the plans, and we have not been able to meet with the USFS to discuss options that we believe are positive. We believe these alternatives that will allow us to understand the USFS better, it will also allow us to support the project. It is our wish to partner with the USFS to accomplish the goals of both the Community and the USFS. Please meet with us. Thank you.

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