

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 5/2/2024 11:40:35 PM

First name: Leslie

Last name: Brown

Organization:

Title:

Comments: I'm a cabin owner in Ski Tur Valley with a deep interest in ecological health and thoughtful, science-based restoration. I strongly support this project for a number of reasons.

First, restoring Gold Creek - and limiting its seasonal dewatering - will not only help to maintain Bull Trout but also a host of other species increasingly challenged by the impact of a drier, hotter environment. Adding large wood, engineered log jams, and intact root wads, where possible, will add complexity to a stream that has been hard hit by logging and other human activities over the decades, and revegetating the stream banks will create a healthier riparian corridor. Streams and rivers are ribbons of life. I find the empty expanse of boulders and rocks, when the stream dewateres in the summer, a sad statement about the state of our ecosystems. A restoration project that returns water to Gold Creek is a life-affirming effort, and I strongly support it.

Second, the restoration project builds on the amazing public investment we've already made in strengthening a wildlife corridor that connects the North and South Cascades. That public investment reflects excellent public policy, helping to ensure species have the room they need to reach critical habitat and maintain healthy, genetically diverse populations. This restoration project is another significant step in supporting a strong and vital wildlife corridor in the Central Cascades.

Third, I believe the project sponsors have done an excellent job in securing some of the best regional consultants to undertake this important work. Specifically, Natural Systems Design has earned a reputation as one of the country's best restoration design firms, and I feel confident that their design, if properly installed and maintained, will achieve the project objectives. I also am familiar with the work by Kittitas Conservation Trust and believe they, too, are a trusted partner.

Finally, I believe I'm deeply privileged to have a cabin in the Gold Creek Valley, a critical habitat area and a place that matters deeply to the Yakama Nation. I can't undo the harms of the past 200 years. But I can support meaningful efforts to repair and mitigate past management activities that have harmed this ecosystem and, in so doing, support the Yakama Nation in their quest for a healthier Gold Creek. That feels important to me.

In order to ensure project success, I encourage project sponsors to address the following:

The EA indicates there will be a 10-year monitoring period following project installation, which is excellent. I would like to know more about what that monitoring will entail and what the project sponsors will do if certain installations or other aspects of the project don't perform as expected. Who will be responsible for addressing any issues that come up, and how will repairs be managed and funded?

I know that revegetation projects can 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.

Finally, I have enormous confidence in NSD, but I know that contractors sometimes depart from engineering designs either because they fail to accurately interpret designs or they're under cost or deadline pressures. I would like to know if there will be consistent on-site oversight by the design/engineering firm so as 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?

Again, I'm deeply supportive of this project and hope to see it come to fruition. Ecological restoration - when done well and thoughtfully - gives me hope that we might be able to secure a healthy future for the species that depend on these habitats and that our children and grandchildren might be able to experience the wonder and beauty that comes with healthy ecosystems.