

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 8/13/2024 6:56:01 AM

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Comments: To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to express my concerns regarding the proposed Gold Creek Valley Restoration Project. While I understand the project's intention to enhance the local ecosystem and improve conditions for the bull trout population, there are several key issues that I believe need to be addressed before proceeding.

Lack of Baseline and Projected Data on Bull Trout Population:

The project documents do not specify the current bull trout population numbers in Gold Creek, nor do they provide any projections for population increases following the implementation of the restoration efforts. It is crucial to establish a clear baseline to determine if there is a sufficient number of bull trout currently in Gold Creek to justify the project's initiation. Furthermore, without data on the expected outcomes, there is no concrete way to measure the project's success or its effectiveness in achieving its goals.

Cost-Benefit Analysis of Altering Developed Recreation Areas:

Gold Creek Pond is a well-established recreational site. Any project that involves significant financial investment to alter an existing developed area should include a transparent and thorough cost-benefit analysis. It is essential to ensure that government funds are being utilized effectively and that the benefits of restoring the pond outweigh the costs involved, both financially and in terms of recreational value.

Impact of Downstream Water Management on Restoration Success:

Gold Creek is located upstream in the Yakima River basin, and it is well-known that the unregulated agricultural water withdrawals downstream significantly contribute to the depletion of water resources in Gold Creek and Keechelus Lake. The restoration project does not address the potential benefits of regulating downstream water usage to improve water levels in Keechelus Lake. There seems to be a lack of study or consideration of this aspect, which could be crucial for the success of the restoration efforts.

Importance of Gold Creek Pond as a Recreational Asset:

Gold Creek Pond is one of the few areas near the greater Seattle region that is accessible to people with disabilities and stroller-friendly. Removing this recreational asset imposes a high cost on the community, particularly for families and individuals with mobility challenges. Any plans to alter or remove existing recreational facilities must carefully weigh the social and community impacts, ensuring that such decisions do not disproportionately disadvantage these groups.

I urge the project coordinators to consider these points and provide more detailed information on the anticipated ecological and community impacts of the restoration project. It is vital that all stakeholders have access to comprehensive data and analyses to make informed decisions about the future of Gold Creek Valley.

Thank you for considering my feedback.