

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 9/11/2024 6:55:38 PM

First name: Robert

Last name: Mecklenburg

Organization:

Title:

Comments: I previously submitted an objection (letter #13) to the EA for restoration of Gold Creek Valley. My issue was the proposed plan to fill Heli's Pond, an action that would eliminate a critical source of water to fight fire in our adjacent community. The Fire Chief and Fire Commissioners of Fire District 51, who are accountable for protecting life and property in our community, share this concern.

The USFS response (#13.1) suggests the community rely on alternative sources of water. These are not feasible alternatives according to the fire professionals. We disagree with the USFS that our community has responsibility to maintain water sources for structural fires. We financially support Fire District 51 who takes this accountability. According to professionals, minutes count in fighting fire. Rapid and sustained delivery of water to a blaze is critical. But local creeks are dry, nearest lakes are distant, the single-lane road into the valley is in poor repair, and portable tanks require time to fill.

There may be alternatives to preserving Heli's Pond as a water source. We are open to other options the USFS may wish to propose and finance. Unfortunately, the USFS has not agreed to meet with the Fire Chief and Commissioners to discuss the situation and reach accord, even with the efforts of Kittitas Conservation Trust to facilitate.

As you know, our community supports the restoration project. Our highest priority, however, is protecting the lives and property of our neighbors as well as the safety of our firefighters. We welcome working together to reach a collaborative solution to meet our respective interests.

Robert Mecklenburg, Gold Creek Valley landowner