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Comments: In addition to the comments that I sent in during scoping (which I would like a response to in the final EIS but choose not to repeat here) I see one major obstacle to the final selection of a solution to the Spirit Lake Outflow problem: COST. I fear that all the good intentions, broad "community and wildlife" concerns will all take a backseat to the present reality of the United State's budget. I do not see any fiscal possibility of a new additional tunnel being funded, as in preferred alternative 7. These big, long tunnels are always behind schedule and wildly over budget. The Seattle viaduct project is one example. Unfortunately, preferred alternatives 7 requires a new tunnel. I like the idea of a natural outlet being allowed to grow over time, but if this is paired with a new tunnel, it will never happen. It will cost too much, period. Given the current financial situation and the current focus of the administration on finances, the federal government will not fund such extravagance, especially in Washington state.

This leaves only alternative 2, fixing the current tunnel, and lowering the lake for more storage. This alternative does not provide the best outcome for fish passage or the opportunity for there ever to be a free-flowing open channel (at least until the volcano erupts again and makes these improvements moot). Despite this weakness, I fear Alternative 2 (or even more minimal repairs the existing tunnel) is the only viable alternative presented given financial realities. I urge the USFS to look at ways to add the opportunity for a natural channel to develop WITHOUT the need of a second tunnel. Reshuffle the options and re-present them with cost concerns being a higher priority. Perhaps the siphon or conduit idea that is not buried, but lays on the surface and is gradually pulled back, could create the natural channel at a much lower cost. Maybe this could be added to fixing the existing tunnel.

Thank you for the opportunity to be involved in the collaborative, but unless cost is looked at more critically, the only action I think will have come from all of these meetings and processes and committees is to fix the tunnel we already have and forget about any other concerns.