

November 16, 2009

Washington Department of Natural Resources
Attn: Kelly Heintz
South Puget Sound Region
950 Farman Ave North
Enumclaw, WA 98022-9282

RE: Designation of Middle Fork Snoqualmie Natural Resources Conservation Area

Dear Ms. Heintz:

American Whitewater is writing in enthusiastic support of the proposal to designate 10,270 acres of Department of Natural Resources (DNR) managed lands as the Middle Fork Snoqualmie Natural Resources Conservation Area (NRCA) in King County.

American Whitewater is a national non-profit 501(c)(3) river conservation organization founded in 1954. We have over 6,500 members and 100 local-based affiliate clubs, representing approximately 80,000 whitewater paddlers across the nation. American Whitewater's mission is to conserve and restore America's whitewater resources and to enhance opportunities to enjoy them safely.

As a conservation-oriented paddling organization, American Whitewater has a long-standing interest in the stewardship and management of the Middle Fork Snoqualmie River. This interest dates back to the founding of our organization in 1954 when members of the Washington Kayak Club were exploring the river and recognized it as a valued recreational asset with high conservation potential. Following construction of Howard Hanson Dam and the loss of a free-flowing Green River, our members advocated for long-term conservation and protection of the Middle Fork Snoqualmie River. We are currently working with Senator Patty Murray and Congressman Dave Reichert to designate the Middle Fork Snoqualmie as a Wild and Scenic River and protect approximately 20,000 acres of USDA Forest Service managed lands along the south side of the river as wilderness. Earlier this month we testified before Congress on the ecosystem and community benefits of protecting federal lands within this river corridor. Designation of the Middle Fork Snoqualmie NRCA which builds off the existing Mt. Si NRCA and complements the efforts underway to protect federal lands, will result in one of the largest blocks of protected low elevation habitat in the Western Cascades.

The Middle Fork of the Snoqualmie River and its upland forests are ecologically significant, and through the Wild and Scenic River study process the river itself, including the section that passes through DNR-managed lands, has been identified as possessing outstanding remarkable values of regional and national significance that

include fishery resources, wildlife habitat, and recreation. The DNR managed lands are contiguous with federal lands identified for long-term conservation¹ which will collectively result in more than 30,000 acres of newly protected lands contiguous with the existing Mt. Si NRCA and Alpine Lakes Wilderness.

American Whitewater looks forward to working with DNR staff, tribes, public land managers in the valley, non-profit organizations, and other stakeholders in the development of a management plan specifically for the Middle Fork Snoqualmie NRCA. Please place our organization on the mailing list and keep us informed of future opportunities to participate.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. O'Keefe', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Thomas O'Keefe, PhD
Pacific Northwest Stewardship Director

¹ See H.R. 1769 <<http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/z?c111:H.R.1769>:> and S. 721 <<http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/z?c111:S.721>:>