

March 31, 2011

Dave Crisman
WSDOT NW Region Project Engineer
1109 East Hickox Road
Mount Vernon, WA 98274

RE: SR9 Pilchuck Creek Bridge Replacement project

Dear Mr. Crisman:

I am writing to express our interest in the SR9 Pilchuck Creek Bridge Replacement project given our interest in this site as a key access point for recreational river runners for the past several decades.

American Whitewater is a national non-profit 501(c)(3) river conservation organization founded in 1954. American Whitewater's mission is to conserve and restore America's whitewater resources and to enhance opportunities to enjoy them safely. We have over 5,000 members and over 100 local-based affiliate clubs, representing thousands of whitewater paddlers across the nation. Here in Washington State we represent an enthusiastic paddling population of approximately 3,000 paddlers through our individual members and local affiliates that include Boeing Recreation Club BEWET, EPIC Adventures at Eastern Washington University, Paddle Trails Canoe Club, Spokane Kayak and Canoe Club, University Kayak Club at University of Washington, Washington Kayak Club, and Washington Recreational Rivers Runners. As an organization representing recreational river runners on issues related to both conservation and public access to waterways, American Whitewater has an interest in Pilchuck Creek. A significant percentage of American Whitewater members reside in Western Washington—a short driving distance from this river for recreation.

Pilchuck Creek represents a well-known destination for the regional paddling community and the Highway 9 Bridge has been recognized as a key public access point for the past several decades. The bridge is the take-out for the Middle Pilchuck run¹ and a put-in for the Lower Pilchuck run.² The Lower Pilchuck run was identified on a series of river recreation maps developed by Wolf Bauer and published by Washington Kayak Club from 1950 to 1965. Both the Lower and Middle run have been identified in guidebooks to whitewater recreation including Werner Furrer's *Water Trails of Washington* (1971 and revised 1979) and Jeff and Tonya Bennett's *A Guide to the Whitewater Rivers of Washington* (1991 and revised in 1998). In addition a National Park Service Inventory and Assessment of River Recreation in Washington published in 1986

¹ <http://www.americanwhitewater.org/content/River/detail/id/2178/>

² <http://www.americanwhitewater.org/content/River/detail/id/2179/>

identified Pilchuck Creek as a river with “high recreation value” for whitewater recreation. This inventory specifically references the access at the Highway 9 Bridge. The river and the Highway 9 Bridge specifically has been in continuous use by recreational river runners for more than 50 years.

Our primary interest is in maintaining public access at this site following construction of a new bridge. Current use primarily consists of small groups during the winter rainy season and existing roadside parking has been adequate. The river is currently accessed by means of an informal social trail on the north side of the river. Following replacement of the bridge a simple trail is all that is required and we ask that any restoration of the site including plantings be designed to accommodate and preserve public access for those launching non-motorized water craft. As an outcome of the project we desire a designated corridor that provides contact access to the water without having to climb across rip rap, over fencing, or through dense plantings. We have successfully worked with engineers on many bridge projects across the country to ensure that final design addresses recreational interests and we look forward to working with you on this project.

I am requesting a response for how river access will be addressed as part of this project including a timeline for how access at the site might be restricted during the construction process. I am available to meet with you or others involved with the project to further discuss any questions or concerns you may have and what the possible solutions would be.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'thbilk' or similar, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Thomas O'Keefe, PhD
Pacific Northwest Stewardship Director