

August 1, 2013

Alice Ann Wetzel, Community Relations Planner
Department of Transportation, Road Services Division
KSC-TR-0824
201 S. Jackson St.
Seattle, WA 98104
aliceann.wetzel@kingcounty.gov

RE: Old Cascade Highway Washout at Miller River

Dear Ms. Wetzel:

We wish to offer comments on the Old Cascade Highway washout at the Miller River Bridge and King County's application for Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) funds to support transportation improvements in the area. While we were not able to attend the meetings that were held in September 2012, April 2013, and June 2013, we appreciate the efforts of you and your staff to provide information on this project and alternatives that have been considered.

American Whitewater is a national non-profit 501(c)(3) river conservation organization founded in 1954. We have over 5500 members and 100 local-based affiliate clubs, representing thousands of 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 an interest in the Miller River. A significant percentage of American Whitewater members reside in Western Washington—a short driving distance from this river for recreation.

The Old Cascade Highway Bridge has traditionally served as a public access and take-out for river runners who enjoy the whitewater recreational opportunities the Miller River provides.¹ Agency inventories have recognized the importance of the river for whitewater recreation. An assessment by King County identified the river-based recreational opportunities the Miller River provides,² Washington State Parks and the National Park Service determined the river to be of average quality for whitewater kayaking,³ and the Mt. Baker Snoqualmie National Forest

¹ American Whitewater National Whitewater River Inventory
<<http://www.americanwhitewater.org/content/River/detail/id/2166/>>

² Recreational Use of King County's River System, King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks Water & Land Resources Division, 2009.

³ River Recreation in Washington, An Initial Inventory and Assessment, US Department of Interior, National Park Service and Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission. 1986.

Plan recommended the river for designation under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act for its recreation, fishery, and wildlife values.⁴

While the January 2011 flood changed the river's course and cut through the roadway, the site continues to serve as an important river access point. Given the reality that the county does not have the funds to replace the roadway or bridge, we support the proposal to add turn-around bulbs near the river bank where the Old Cascade Highway approaches the river from both the east and west side with a clearly defined walking trail to the river that is accessible to recreational river users. Options for limited parking should also be included in the design for the site.

Thank you for keeping us informed of the status of this project and providing the opportunity for input. As the project proceeds to the design stage, we would appreciate notification of future opportunities to provide input on site design.

Sincerely,



Thomas O'Keefe, PhD
Pacific Northwest Stewardship Director



*Kayakers take out on the Old Cascade Highway at the Miller Bridge site in May 2013.
Photo by Daniel Patrinellis.*

⁴ United States Forest Service. Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest Land Resource Management Plan. June 1990. Wild and Scenic Rivers, Appendix E, pp. E-194 to E-196.