



Thomas O'Keefe, WA Regional
Coordinator
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Seattle, WA 98115
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Clare Fogelsong
Environmental Resources Manager
Public Works
210 Lottie Street
Bellingham, WA 98225

RE: Middle Fork of the Nooksack, City of Bellingham diversion structure

Dear Mr. Fogelsong:

American Whitewater is a national non-profit 501(c)(3) river conservation and recreation organization founded in 1957. We have over 8,000 members and 160 canoe club affiliates, representing approximately 180,000 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 and our affiliate clubs in Western Washington have a strong interest in the future navigation of the Middle Fork Nooksack and the protection of aquatic resources including threatened chinook salmon. A significant percentage of American Whitewater members reside in Western Washington—a short driving distance for whitewater recreation on the Middle Fork of the Nooksack. The Middle Fork of the Nooksack from Clearwater Creek to Heisters Creek is recognized as an expert whitewater run through a constrained bedrock canyon. Paddlers currently portage the City of Bellingham's diversion dam and while it can be negotiated without incident the dam is recognized as a hindrance to navigation. American Whitewater has a direct interest in the future of this structure and the potential construction of a new water supply intake. We support removal of the current structure and want to make sure that a new intake system does not negatively impact recreational opportunities. Additional information on the whitewater opportunities on this run can be found at <<http://www.americanwhitewater.org/rivers/id/3116/>>.

For 40 years, the dam has been a barrier to fish and navigation on the Middle Fork of the Nooksack River. The proposal to remove the dam will likely be more cost-effective than constructing a ladder, will reconnect the river in a manner that allows the natural transport of materials (e.g. gravels, organic matter) downstream, will allow for the free upstream and downstream movement of not only chinook salmon but other aquatic species that utilize this reach of river, and will provide continuous navigation of the river for recreation. Please keep us informed of any updates on this project. We would like the opportunity to comment on any designs for this site before a final plan is developed.

Sincerely,

cc:
John Gangemi, Conservation Director
American Whitewater
482 Electric Avenue
Big Fork, MT 59911