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May 13, 2014

Bob Romine, Project Engineer
WSDOT North Central Region
P.O. Box 98 Wenatchee, WA 98807

RE: US 2 – Wenatchee River Bridge

Dear Mr. Romine:

I am writing to express our interest in the US 2 Wenatchee River 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 individual 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, Washington Recreational Rivers Runners, and Whitman College Outdoor Program. As an organization representing recreational river runners on issues related to both conservation and public access to waterways, American Whitewater has an interest in the Wenatchee River. A significant percentage of American Whitewater members reside in Washington State—a short driving distance from this river for recreation.

The Wenatchee River represents a well-known destination for the regional paddling community and the US Highway 2 Bridge has been recognized as a key public access point for the past several decades. The bridge is the take-out for the Wenatchee River run from Lake Wenatchee to Tumwater Campground¹ and a put-in for the Tumwater Canyon run.² The Wenatchee River run from Lake Wenatchee to Tumwater Campground was identified on a series of river recreation maps developed by Wolf Bauer and published by Washington Kayak Club from 1950 to 1965. The run was included in 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). The current Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest Plan recommends the Wenatchee River for designation under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and specifically identifies

¹ <http://www.americanwhitewater.org/content/River/detail/id/2265/>

² <http://www.americanwhitewater.org/content/River/detail/id/2266/>

this segment of the river as outstandingly remarkable for recreation due in part to the fact that the river "provides a strong attraction to those who enjoy whitewater rafting and boating."³ In addition a National Park Service Inventory and Assessment of River Recreation in Washington published in 1986 identified this section of the Wenatchee River as a river with "high recreation value." The river and the section that ends at the US 2 Wenatchee River Bridge has been in continuous use by recreational river runners for more than 50 years.

Our primary interest is a provision for public access at this site following removal of the old bridge that is downstream of the new bridge and accessible from Forest Road 7905. This would provide a better alternative to the current practice of utilizing campsites within Tumwater Campground for river access. Once the bridge is removed, we request that a simple trail be developed from a pullout off Forest Road 7905 to the west bank of the river. Restoration of the site including plantings should be designed to accommodate public access for those desiring access for 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.

We would appreciate a response for how river access will be addressed as part of this project. 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,



Thomas O'Keefe, PhD
Pacific Northwest Stewardship Director

CC:

Jeff Rivera, District Ranger
Wenatchee River Ranger District
600 Sherbourne
Leavenworth, WA 98826

³ At Page E-19, Wenatchee National Forest, Land and Water Resource Management Plan, Wild and Scenic Rivers Eligibility Assessment, February 1990.