



Thomas O'Keefe, PhD
Pacific Northwest Stewardship Director
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Tom Teigen
Snohomish County Parks
6705 Puget Park Drive
Snohomish WA 98296

May 29, 2014

Dear Mr. Teigen,

We are writing to express our support for the completion of the White Horse Trail that runs along the North Fork of the Stillaguamish River. The river itself has been recognized as a water trail used by local paddlers since at least the early 1960's and the development of the rail trail will significantly enhance the overall recreational experience in the Stillaguamish Valley.

American Whitewater is a national non-profit 501(c)(3) river conservation organization founded in 1954. We have over 6,000 members and 100 local-based affiliate clubs, representing 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 North Fork Stillaguamish River. A significant percentage of American Whitewater members reside in Western Washington—a short driving distance from this river for recreation.

The North Fork Stillaguamish River has been a well-known paddling destination for the last several decades used by our local members, affiliate clubs, and the general public. We understand that the Whitehorse Trail will ultimately consist of a 27 mile long corridor from Arlington to Darrington that parallels the river and connects to the Centennial Trail. Completing this trail will provide economic benefits to the communities of Arlington, Oso, and Darrington by enhancing opportunities for active outdoor recreation. It will provide a direct benefit to paddlers who wish to run a bike shuttle (leave a bike at the take-out that is used to retrieve the vehicle left at the put-in).

We enthusiastically support funding requests to complete paving, decking, railings, embankment restoration, signage, bridges restoration and vegetation management. We also ask that you consider river access at key trailheads. While there are several sites where the public accesses the river, few of these sites have adequate or clearly defined parking, sanitation facilities are lacking, and social trails to the river are poorly defined with associated safety issues and resource impacts. We believe that facilities to access the trail can be entirely compatible with facilities to access the river and we request that you seek opportunities to meet this dual interest as you proceed forward with design work and construction.

We look forward to working with you in promoting completion of the Whitehorse Trail and actively promote the spectacular recreational resources of the Stillaguamish River Valley.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. O'Keefe', written over a horizontal line.

Thomas O'Keefe, PhD
Pacific Northwest Stewardship Director