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June 19th, 2014

Rocky Houston
State Trails Coordinator
Oregon Parks and Recreation Department
725 Summer Street N.E., Suite C
Salem, Oregon 97301
Email: rocky.houston@oregon.gov

RE: Salmonberry Corridor Master Plan

Dear Mr. Houston:

I am writing to express the interest of American Whitewater in the Salmonberry Corridor Master Plan and your invitation to provide input to guide the master planning and design efforts in the corridor. We support the concept of a rail-trail connecting the City of Tillamook to the City of Banks that would include a section of trail running through the remote canyon of the Salmonberry River. As part of this overall planning effort, we want to make sure you are aware of the importance of the Beaver Slide Road as the only practical access point for whitewater boaters who have enjoyed this river for many years.

American Whitewater is a national non-profit 501(c)(3) river conservation organization founded in 1954. We have approximately 6000 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 Salmonberry and Nehalem Rivers. A significant percentage of American Whitewater members reside in the Pacific Northwest—a short driving distance from this river for recreation.

The Salmonberry River is an approximately 10 mile whitewater run that is known for its great rapids, beautiful scenery, excellent water quality, and remote backcountry character.¹ An article in the Oregonian described it as the "Shangri-La of spring rivers for whitewater boaters."² For many years, our members have enjoyed the unique recreational opportunities this river provides. Expanding recreational use and opportunities within this river corridor is something we support as many of our members enjoy hiking and biking and this could be a spectacular trail with national visibility and recognition. In addition, the clean up of rail and communication debris in the canyon would enhance the visual experience and safety for those who choose to experience the river corridor through paddlesports.

¹ <http://www.americanwhitewater.org/content/River/detail/id/10412/>

² http://www.oregonlive.com/outdoors/index.ssf/2009/04/the_salmonberry_is_the_shangri.html

As you consider further development of recreational opportunities, however we strongly urge you to recognize the existing recreation that has occurred in the Salmonberry River canyon for many years and specifically the importance of Beaver Slide Road for access for whitewater recreation during the winter rainy season (a review of USGS gage data shows that the primary boating opportunities occur between mid October and mid May). Several local members have contacted us to express concern that closure of Beaver Slide Road is being considered among the alternatives for this project. This would have a significant impact on our community's existing use and would effectively close the run to intermediate whitewater paddlers. We strongly urge that the Beaver Slide Road remain open, at least during the peak boating season during the time of winter rains, to allow continued river access. We suspect that there may also be benefits for emergency access to this remote canyon.

We request that our comments be included in the record for the Salmonberry Corridor Master Plan and that our organization be placed on the mailing list for this project.

Sincerely,



Thomas O'Keefe, PhD
Pacific Northwest Stewardship Director

cc:

Doug Decker, Oregon State Forester, Oregon Department of Forestry, ddecker@odf.state.or.us
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