

March 18, 2016

Jeff Smith, Managing Director of District Services
Chelan County PUD
327 N. Wenatchee Ave.
Wenatchee, WA 98801

RE: Wenatchee River Access at Plain

Dear Mr. Smith:

I am writing to express our interest and support for the proposal to construct a parking lot and river access on Chelan County PUD property at the intersection of Beaver Valley Highway and River Road where Beaver Valley Highway crosses the Wenatchee River. This site has served 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, Paddle Trails Canoe Club, Spokane Kayak and Canoe Club, The Mountaineers, 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 bridge in Plain 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 Plain and a put-in for the run from Plain to the start of Tumwater Canyon at the Highway 2 Bridge.¹ In addition, it serves as a take-out for the run on the Chiwawa River.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

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

² <http://www.americanwhitewater.org/content/River/detail/id/2087/>

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 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." This segment of the river has been in continuous use by recreational river runners for more than 50 years.

A formal river access point and parking area on Chelan County PUD property at the intersection of Beaver Valley Highway and River Road where Beaver Valley Highway crosses the Wenatchee River would be welcomed by our members and all who recreate on this river. Improved access at this site will address current safety issues for those who are loading and unloading boats along the highway and enhance the quality of the user experience.

We appreciate the investment and commitment Chelan PUD has made in enhancing recreational opportunities for river runners. If any issues or concerns emerge regarding your ability to implement this project, please do not hesitate to contact us. We have worked on several successful river access projects across the country and would be happy to provide any technical assistance we can to make this project a reality.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T O'Keefe', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Thomas O'Keefe, PhD
Pacific Northwest Stewardship Director

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