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Bob Zeigler
SEPA Responsible Official
Habitat Program]
WDFW
600 Capitol Way N.
Olympia, WA 98501-1091
SEPAdesk2@dfw.wa.gov

SUBJECT: DNS 13-082 Whiskey Dick Wildlife Area Seasonal Road Closure –
Kittitas County

Dear Mr. Zeigler:

I am writing in opposition to DNS 13-082 Whiskey Dick Wildlife Area Seasonal
Road Closure – Kittitas County for the following reasons:

I am disappointed that WDFW continues to not effectively use public participation
in the decision making process for the management of public lands. There is a
pattern of WDFW personnel deciding what they are going to do, then doing
minimal public input, when the decision has already been made. If WDFW had a
pattern of effectively using public participation in a transparent decision making
process, trust and support would improve.

In June of 2007 the “temporary” winter closure was proposed for two years. Here
we are 6 ½ years later looking at another “temporary” winter closure. At the
January 7, 2013 Elk Study meeting it was announced that the winter closure
would be temporary for 2013 and then permanent after that. Is this another
example of an “only temporary closure when first promised” becoming another
permanent closure?

The Big Game Management Roundtable group and Director Anderson have both
gone on the record that the closure was needed for reducing agricultural
degradation, and not herd health. The winter closure has not been effective in
reducing agricultural degradation. The elk are not only on agricultural and
private land, but they have been on the old Vantage Highway and interstate
freeway during the winter closure.

I recreate in this area year round as a law abiding citizen, respectful of both the
animals and the land. It is one of the few areas available to motor vehicles
during the winter months, as snowmobile grooming trails and other WDFW
closures restrict usage elsewhere. During extreme winters motorized vehicles
cannot access all areas of the Whiskey Dick.

Studies done on the Colockum elk herd determined that elk go where the food is. If WDFW wants to encourage elk to stay on public lands, they need to improve their rangeland. This is especially important because the Colockum elk herd has increased in number to the point that poorly managed public lands are not going to support the existing herd.

Please let me know if you have questions or need additional information.

Sincerely,

Lana Thomas Cruse