

## **Laura Schiltz Comment on Whiskey Dick Seasonal Road Closure**

Dear Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife,

I fully support the winter closure of the Whiskey Dick area to provide some peace for the Colockum elk herd after a stressful fall hunt, and while this elk herd faces so many other threats that impact their health and survival. I completely oppose the DNS that suggests there is no impact to opening a road through the middle of the seasonal closure that would not only reduce its impact, but likely lead to unauthorized use that you have no capacity to manage or hold to accountability.

I must believe that the proposal to open this road is a response to the few loud voices that have arisen and impact politics last legislative session, but I remind you that these are public lands that are first and foremost to provide habitat for wildlife. When we have an elk population that is valued in our state not only for its existence and our ability to view it, but also for its value to the hunting community - I find it impossible to believe that any additional disturbance to it would be in compliance with your elk management policy or mission. I have also been aware that a larger public planning process is underway that is addressing the question of longer term recreation planning in this area that is in balance with a healthier elk herd, so why would you make this change to the existing management for one year prior to the decision about the long-term management based on science and public comments.

I not only oppose the DNS, but suggest that you return to a one year of continued complete winter closure to motorized use. There remains value to people and the recreational community even with this closure with the experience of snowshoeing and winter skiing. Then, open the dialogue about the potential impacts of this road opening through a real public process based on your informed alternatives through the larger landscape recreation planning process.

These are public lands of all members of Washington state, not just a few loud local voices. Please count my support for a complete winter closure and management that promotes a healthy herd as equally as those that clearly impacted this decision.

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