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Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW)

Contact: Ross Huffman

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Naches, WA 98937

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June 17, 2014

Dear Mr. Huffman,

We are writing to express our support for the objectives of the Oak Creek Wildlife Area Road Management Non Green Dot Area:

1. Implement a road management plan for the Oak Creek and Rock Creek Units of the Oak Creek Wildlife Area in areas that are not part of the Green Dot Travel Management System.
2. Improve aquatic and terrestrial systems by abandoning roads and trails that are causing significant resource and environmental damage, primarily in areas with unstable geology.
3. Restore habitat in areas highly degraded by off road vehicle use.
4. Maintain and improve official US Forest Service motorized trails.
5. Seasonally close a road to motor vehicles in an area heavily used by elk (Sept 15-Nov 15).
6. Create additional disabled hunter opportunities on the wildlife area by closing the 1302511 road and adding it to the Disabled Hunter Access Program.

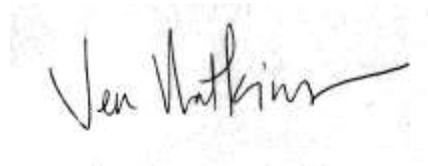
Recreation on state fish and wildlife lands should be provided when it can be consistent with the goals to manage for the promotion and longterm health of the natural resources. Roads impact both the aquatic and terrestrial resources of our wildlife areas in significant ways, and we appreciate this effort to find a balanced system that provides access and recreation while working to restore and maintain habitat. The SEPA documentation states, "The roads proposed for abandonment are forest roads and have been identified in the Oak Creek Road Maintenance and Abandonment Plan (RMAP) for abandonment. The roads are proposed for abandonment because they are no longer needed for land management, can no longer be maintained due to unstable geology and past/continuing slope failures, no longer have vehicular access due washouts on adjacent federal land, are short spur roads to log landings, or have resource damage issues. There are also numerous illegal ORV trails being used in the area that will be abandoned due to resource damage. All road and trail abandonment will be to Forest Practice standards at a minimum. Roads with vehicle closures will have gates and signs installed to restrict vehicle access." We support the decision to reduce road miles that meet the criteria above, and request a dialogue to better understand the impact of specific roads as they improve elk security habitat and movement corridors in this area as well as riparian habitat. We request a

map in addition to what was provided with the SEPA documentation that shows the individual segments for closure and new construction. Additionally we request the total number and mileage of unauthorized trail segments that will be addressed with this project, and what plans exist for increased enforcement that will help ensure these miles are not created again post-decision. Finally, is all funding for implementation secured prior to this decision or is it still needed?

We believe this decision compliments the work that your agency is conducting through the Tapash Sustainable Forest Collaborative to collaborate with the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest and partners on landscape restoration including access management in the adjacent Little Naches watershed. Ensuring that sound management is occurring across ownerships is a vital piece of that collaboration.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment and engage. We appreciate the management of this wildlife area taking on not only management of the Green Dot system, but taking a holistic look at the real system on the ground and how to improve the situation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jen Watkins". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Jen Watkins
Conservation Northwest
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