From:	Dale Bambrick - NOAA Federal
To:	Wood, Lisa (DFW)
Subject:	DNS 14-059: STRAY GULCH ROAD CONSTRUCTION - Kittitas County
Date:	Tuesday, September 09, 2014 10:58:28 AM

Dear Ms. Wood:

I recently learned the WDFW proposes to rebuild the Stray Gulch road. This is a puzzling acquiescence to the short-sighted and selfish agitation of a few individuals. When the road was abandoned in 2012, WDFW set in motion the recovery Tekison Creek, a sensitive shrub steppe stream and riparian habitat. Protection of such habitats helps ensure that the Colockum Wildlife Area can serve the very purpose for which it was acquired.

While a portion of the new road will be located a bit more upland than the old, it would harm fish and wildlife to a similar extent. The new road would speed the rate of runoff, depleting late season stream flow. It would deliver many tons of sediment to Tekison Creek annually, reducing fish habitat quality. Perhaps most significantly, it would discourage use of the area by beaver or necessitate their removal should they become established and threaten the road. Shrub steppe streams like Tekison are remarkably diverse but extremely vulnerable habitats. It's all about the water, and by August there is very little of it. Without fully functioning floodplain storage and without beaver, these streams become intermittent and their habitat value is lost. This is obviously and in particular true for fish.

At a time when the WDFW scrambles to fund the essential management actions on its wildlife areas it make no sense to waste funds on a road to nowhere. As a short drive on most wildlife areas will attest, WDFW lacks funding to properly maintain many of the roads that should remain open. Closing very low priority roads like Stray Gulch is an essential budget management strategy. When one also considers the ecologic costs, the decision to keep the road closed is nearly self-executing.

If the Stray Gulch road can't be kept closed it seems unlikely that any road on WDFW land can be permanently closed. I urge you to reconsider this proposal. I believe that an overwhelming majority of sportsfolk would oppose this proposal if they understood the context. Certainly all responsible resource managers would favor keeping this road closed. Mustering the resolve to close this road in the first place was a laudable act. To back away now would be extremely disappointing and contrary to the WDFW's mission and the purpose of the Colockum Wildlife Area.

Thank you for your consideration. I wish you well.

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"*Whose woods these are I think I know.*" - Frost

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