

4 January 2006

Crilly Ritz, Senior Planner
Snohomish County Public Works Department
2930 Wetmore Ave, Suite 101
Everett, WA 98201-4044

RE: Sauk River Bridge #414 Replacement

Dear Crilly Ritz:

I am writing to express our interest in the Sauk River Bridge replacement and our desire to preserve opportunities for river access following completion of this project. While we understand that you have contacted commercial outfitters who offer guided trips on the Sauk River, we represent private individuals who enjoy the recreational opportunities on the Sauk River by kayak, raft, and canoe.

American Whitewater is a national non-profit 501(c)(3) river conservation organization founded in 1954. We have over 6,500 members and 100 local-based affiliate clubs, representing approximately 80,000 whitewater paddlers across the nation. American Whitewater's mission is to conserve and restore America's whitewater resources and to enhance opportunities to enjoy them safely. As a conservation-oriented paddling organization, American Whitewater has an interest in the rivers throughout Snohomish County and particularly those designated Wild and Scenic in the Skagit/Sauk watershed. A significant percentage of American Whitewater members reside in Western Washington and southwest British Columbia a short driving distance from this river for recreation.

Access at the Sauk River Bridge has been utilized by river runners for the past several decades and is described in many local guidebooks including the following: Werner Furrer, 1979, *Water Trails of Washington* (revised edition), Signpost Books; Jeff and Tonya Bennett, 1997, *A Guide to the Whitewater of Washington* (second edition), Swiftwater Publishing; and Douglass North, 1999, *Washington Whitewater* (revised edition), The Mountaineers. In addition this access is described on the American Whitewater website <<http://www.americanwhitewater.org>> which includes a database of more than 4500 whitewater reaches across the country used for recreation. Given the high quality of whitewater, dependability of flows during winter rains and spring snowmelt, and the scenic attributes of the Sauk River this is a very popular trip for whitewater paddlers and a significant natural attraction within Snohomish County. This 414 Bridge access is located at river mile 21.3 and alternate access points exist upstream at Bachman Park (river mile 24.5) and downstream at the Highway 530 Bridge (river mile 12.3). Temporary loss of access at the 414 Bridge can be accommodated by use of these other sites in the short term however a long term site plan that includes river access at this site is important. The access at the 414 Bridge is used in several different ways: local individuals desiring a quick evening float will put in at Clear Creek (river mile 25.3) and will run to the 414 Bridge, individuals who put-in at the Forest Service Whitechuck Boat launch (river mile 31.8) will use the 414 Bridge when they wish to extend their trips beyond Bachman Park, and individuals who wish to avoid the more challenging whitewater upstream of the 414 Bridge will put in here to run down to the Forest Service access at the Highway 530 Bridge (river mile 12.3). This site is thus popular with a diversity of users and

is particularly important because the low gradient of bank access on the downstream-west side of the bridge can accommodate heavy craft such as rafts and larger canoes.

American Whitewater requests that river access be formally considered in the design and provided by completion of the project. The access site need not be at the location currently used but it should be within the footprint of the disturbed area adjacent to the new bridge and at a site that provides convenient low bank access and a haul out area for heavy boats such as rafts. We would appreciate the opportunity to review any designs that illustrate how river access will be addressed. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any additional questions. Please also include me on correspondence for this project or any other bridge projects in the County that may impact river access for private users (this would include Pilchuck Creek, Stillaguamish River, Suiattle River, Sauk River, Skykomish River, and their tributaries).

Sincerely,



Thomas O'Keefe
Pacific Northwest Stewardship Director

cc:

Phil Kincare
Skagit Wild and Scenic River Program
Mt Baker Ranger District
Sedro Woolley, WA 98284

Washington Kayak Club
P.O. Box 24264
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Paddle Trails Canoe Club
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University Kayak Club
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