
June 20, 2018

Re: Middle Fork Nooksack River Fish Passage Project (PRISM #18-1534)

Dear PSAR Large Capital Projects Review Team:

We write in support of the Middle Fork Nooksack Fish Passage Project. Project elements include dam removal that will reconnect habitat, improve public safety, and restore natural geomorphic processes; water intake relocation that will eliminate the need for a dam; and fish screen installation.

American Whitewater is a national non-profit 501(c)(3) river conservation organization founded in 1954 with approximately 6000 members and 100 local-based affiliate clubs, representing whitewater enthusiasts 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 and our affiliate clubs in Western Washington have a strong interest in the future navigation of the Middle Fork Nooksack and the protection of aquatic resources including chinook salmon, bull trout, and steelhead. A significant percentage of American Whitewater members reside in Western Washington—a short driving distance for whitewater recreation on the Middle Fork Nooksack.

The Middle Fork Nooksack from Clearwater Creek to Heisters Creek is recognized as an expert whitewater run through a constrained bedrock canyon.¹ In 1993 American Whitewater worked with Washington Department of Ecology and the National Park Service to document the recreational value of this river reach for whitewater boating as part of the study process for the proposed Heislars Creek Hydroelectric Project.² Paddlers currently portage the City of Bellingham's diversion dam and while it can be negotiated without incident, the dam is recognized as a safety hazard and barrier to navigation. American Whitewater has a direct interest in the future of this structure and the proposed construction of a new water supply intake. We support removal of the current structure and restoration of the river channel that will restore ecological function and eliminate public safety concerns associated with the current structure.

We appreciate the leadership demonstrated by the City of Bellingham, American Rivers, and the Paul Allen Family Foundation in moving this project forward towards timely completion by 2020.

Sincerely,



Thomas O'Keefe, PhD
Pacific Northwest Stewardship Director

¹ American Whitewater National Whitewater River Inventory <<http://www.americanwhitewater.org/rivers/id/3116/>>

² Federal Energy Regulatory Commission eLibrary Accession Number19930405-0443,
<https://elibrary.ferc.gov/idmws/search/intermediate.asp?link_file=yes&doclist=1560797>