



Thomas O'Keefe, PhD
Pacific Northwest Stewardship Director
3537 NE 87th St.
Seattle, WA 98115
okeefe@americanwhitewater.org

July 19th, 2022

Steve McKenna, President, <steve.mckenna@chelanpud.org>
Ann Congdon, Vice-President <ann.congdon@chelanpud.org>
Garry Arseneault, Secretary <garry.arseneault@chelanpud.org>
Dennis Bolz, Commissioner <dennis.bolz@chelanpud.org>
Randy Smith, Commissioner <r.smith@chelanpud.org>
Chelan County Public Utility District
327 N. Wenatchee Ave.
Wenatchee, WA 98801

RE: Removal of Tumwater Dam

Dear Commissioners:

I am writing on behalf of American Whitewater and our interest in removal of Tumwater Dam and restoration of the Wenatchee River. We appreciate the community outreach conducted by Chelan PUD to solicit public input on necessary repairs required if the dam is to remain in place. We believe removal of the structure will be much more cost-effective in the long-term and prevent further degradation to the river. The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, signed into law in 2021, provides \$800 million in federal funding for dam removal. This presents a unique opportunity to secure resources to remove this dam that is no longer providing beneficial services.

American Whitewater is a national non-profit 501(c)(3) river conservation organization founded in 1954 with approximately 50,000 supporters, 6,000 dues-paying members, and 100 local-based affiliate clubs, representing whitewater enthusiasts across the nation. American Whitewater's mission is to protect and restore America's whitewater rivers and to enhance opportunities to enjoy them safely. The organization is the primary advocate for the preservation and protection of whitewater rivers throughout the United States, and connects the interests of human-powered recreational river users with ecological and science-based data to achieve the goals within its mission. Our vision is that our nation's remaining wild and free-flowing rivers stay that way, our developed rivers are restored to function and flourish, that

the public has access to rivers for recreation, and that river enthusiasts are active and effective river advocates.

The Wenatchee River, and Tumwater Canyon, is known as a spectacular whitewater resource. Many of the nation's top whitewater athletes train on the class V whitewater of Tumwater Canyon for expeditions around the world. It represents a unique and valued regional asset. Midway through the run however the kayakers encounter the slackwater of "Lake Jolanda," an unnatural reservoir created by Tumwater Dam that retains gravel, increases water temperature, and buries whitewater resources.

The Tumwater Dam was constructed more than a century ago to provide hydroelectric power for electric locomotives traveling through the old Cascade Tunnel on the Stevens Pass route. The Tumwater Hydroelectric Project was closed in 1956 and subsequently acquired by Chelan PUD. Today this outdated dam does not provide electricity, does not provide flood control, degrades river health, disrupts natural geomorphic processes, and represents an ongoing liability. Earlier this year, Chelan PUD provided public notice that repairs to the dam are necessary and estimated at \$2.5 million to \$4 million. Instead of further investing in this structure we urge you to seriously consider removal.

American Whitewater has been an active participant in discussions regarding the fate of Tumwater Dam and we were among the entities represented at the Tumwater Dam Stakeholder Discussion on January 13th, 2016.¹ Our local members have also participated in the community outreach Chelan PUD has initiated this spring with an online survey and public meeting in Leavenworth. While we understand that the dam has been used in recent years to meet fishery management objectives, we believe these objectives can be met without a dam in place. Removing the dam will ultimately improve river health and benefit fishery resources.

Resources are in place to assist with dam removal. The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act was signed into law on November 15, 2021,² and includes \$800 million in federal funding for dam removal including through the NOAA Based Restoration Grant Program (\$400 million), US Fish and Wildlife Service National Fish Passage Program (\$200 million), FEMA High Hazard Dam Program (\$75 million), Army Corps of Engineers Section 206 Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Program (\$115 million), and Forest Service Capital Improvement and Maintenance (\$10 million). Funding for dam removal through these programs provides a unique opportunity for federal

¹ Tumwater Dam, Stakeholder Discussion - Meeting Notes, January 13th, 2016, Sponsored by Cascade Columbia Fisheries Enhancement Group, <<https://www.chelanpud.org/docs/default-source/licensing-and-compliance/47481-tumwater-stakeholder-summary-notes.pdf>>.

² Public Law 117-58, <<https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/3684/text>>.

investment and assistance. Private philanthropy is also a possible resource. The Open Rivers Fund established by the Hewlett Foundation and administered by Resources Legacy Fund represents a potential source of funding;³ the Paul G. Allen Family Foundation has also invested in dam removal.⁴

We thank you for taking the initiative to solicit public input on the future of Tumwater Dam. We strongly encourage you to evaluate dam removal as a cost-effective alternative that avoids ongoing maintenance costs, restores river health for fishery resources and public benefit, and is in the public interest. Significant resources through both public and private funding are currently available, but these resources will not be available indefinitely; we encourage Chelan PUD to take advantage of the opportunity to restore the Wenatchee River in Tumwater Canyon.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. O'Keefe', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Thomas O'Keefe, PhD
Pacific Northwest Stewardship Director

³ New 'Open Rivers Fund' to restore waterways, remove aging dams, Elizabeth Grossman, Hewlett Foundation, November 29, 2016, <<https://hewlett.org/openriversfund/>>

⁴ Paul G. Allen Family Foundation, Press Room, Middle Fork Nooksack River Fish Passage Project Begins, Bellingham, WA, Jun 17, 2020, <<https://pgafamilyfoundation.org/press-room/2020/middle-fork-nooksack-river-fish-passage-project-be.aspx>>.