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May 12, 2010

Daina Bambe, District Ranger
Hood River Ranger District
6780 Highway 35
Parkdale, Oregon 97041

Re: Wild and Scenic River Management Plans

Dear District Ranger Bambe:

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me last month regarding the development of river management plans for the newly designated rivers on the Mt. Hood National Forest as part of the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009.

American Whitewater is a national non-profit 501(c)(3) river conservation organization founded in 1954. We have approximately 6,000 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 Oregon which represent some of our nation's finest rivers attracting paddlers from around the world. In Oregon our affiliate clubs include Lower Columbia Canoe Club, Oregon Kayak and Canoe Club, Oregon Whitewater Association, Northwest Rafters Association, and Willamette Kayak and Canoe Club. A significant percentage of American Whitewater members reside in Oregon including paddlers living in Wasco County, Hood River County, Multnomah County, Clackamas County, and Marion County who regularly enjoy the opportunities their home rivers provide for recreation, solitude, and aesthetic enjoyment. A recent study¹ completed as part of relicensing of hydroelectric facilities on the Clackamas River found that an "enthusiast" population of up to 3,000 whitewater paddlers lives in the greater Portland area and utilizes the resources of the Clackamas River and its tributaries, and that growth of the sport currently exceeds that of most human-powered outdoor recreation activities.

Our local members have been active proponents for Wild and Scenic River designation and were strong advocates for long-term protection of the rivers of Mt. Hood. All the newly designated rivers are tributaries to some of the region's most popular and scenic rivers for whitewater recreation and their protection will ensure the long-term health of these watersheds.

Of the designated rivers, the South Fork Clackamas, Collawash, Eagle Creek, East Fork Hood, and Zigzag all provide opportunities for whitewater recreation. These rivers are used by our membership, and the long-term protection designated will offer significant opportunities for

¹ Bo Shelby and Doug Whittaker. September 2004. Clackamas River Hydroelectric Project Regional Demand for Whitewater Kayaking. Prepared for Portland General Electric, Portland, OR.

future public enjoyment. The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act recognizes the value of wild rivers and provides protections that afford future generations the opportunity to enjoy these special places.

In our view, one of the most important outcomes of Wild and Scenic designation is the development of a comprehensive river management plan. These plans are created through a public process following designation. Our experience has been that this process affords an opportunity for the public to implement a vision for appropriate management of these rivers that recognizes existing uses and protects the river for future generations. While we believe that some elements of the river plans for the different rivers can be integrated as appropriate to achieve efficiencies in the planning effort, we believe the river plans should be readily available to the public and distinct from the overall Forest Plan (e.g. as an appendix). As you move forward with the planning process, we request that you place us on the list of interested organizations.

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

cc:

Susan Sater
Regional Congressionally Designated Areas Program Manager
US Forest Service - Pacific Northwest Region
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