**Wenatchee Whitewater Park Feasibility Study Community Meeting Notes**, 4/22/2021 6:30pm

**Erin Mckay**, **Chelan County Natural Resources (CCNRD)**: Acting as Project Manager for Wenatchee Whitewater Park, I will facilitate the meeting and be a contact for comments and questions after the meeting. Welcome and thanks to everyone for being here!

**Mike Kaputa, CCNRD Director**: The idea for the Wenatchee Whitewater Park (WWP) started about 4 years ago when CCNRD was working on the Parks and Recreation element of the County Wide Comprehensive Plan (the Plan). The idea of WWP was included in the Plan and Wenatchee River Alliance (WRA) got on board in support. Thanks to Jennifer Hadersberger and Erin Mckay for coordinating. This effort is made possible by our major funders, and we also want to give a big thanks to them: Our Valley Our Future, was the first funder. The Chelan County Commissioners recently donated to support the Feasibility Study, which is on-going now and enables us to work with experts in field and work with WRA.

**Bob Bugert, County Commissioner:** Thanks everyone this is an exciting project**.**

**Nate Woodard, WRA**. The WRA formed out of Planning Board in 2017/2018.

WRA mission: Dedicated to enhancing recreation opportunities on Wenatchee River,

Waves happen 2 months out of year. Lower flows not great/useful for kayaking and whitewater activities. White waterpark idea came out of that.

**Erin McKay**: In 2017, CCNRD took over the Recreation element of the County Wide Comprehensive Plan. CCNRD took over the Rec element. As part of that, we developed a survey on the recreation element and distributed it to the community for feedback. The idea for WWP had a lot of interest. Whitewater enthusiasts (kayakers, rafters, etc) formed the WRA. The WWP is listed as a Tier 1 project in the Plan for developing a feasibility study. In 2021 an addendum was added to the Plan which included an economic development plan, and that was when we got some county funding to do a Feasibility Study for the WWP.

The first step for the feasibility study was to reach out to consulting firms that are experts in WWPs and freshwater salmon habitat. Federally listed ESA species use Wenatchee River as migratory and spawning ground so anything we do needs to preserve and or enhance existing habitat.

We hired two consultant teams: Recreation Engineering and Planning (RE and P), a firm that specializes in WWPs, and PAR excellence, a habitat restoration firm.

Our overall goal for the feasibility study is to look at sites that have potential for supporting this type of recreation opportunity. We look through multiple lenses: Is there public access? Is there potential for improving the habitat at the site? What are the physical constraints at the site? Is it actually feasible to do? What are the fishery needs (i.e. hatchery broodstock collection, spawning habitat, migration, etc)

An important reminder: what we present today is just a preliminary look at these sites. We want to get feedback from you, and your feedback is a critical step in how we move forward. CCNRD is in game of restoration to protect listed fish. This makes us good facilitators for this process, because ESA-listed salmon habitat is critical to take in account if this is going to move forward (i.e., to get it permitted). Overall this effort is a partnership between WRA and Chelan County.

Introduce our Consultant Team:

Mike Harvey: Whitewater park designer based out of Colorado, REP

Mason Lacy: Professional Engineer; based in Bend, OR; REP

Randy Goetz: PAR Excellence, based out of Hood River, OR, Habitat Restoration Biologist

**Mike Harvey, Whitewater park designer Presentation:**

I’m from the Arkansas River in Colorado. I’ve worked around North America on these projects for 21 years. The most important thing to keep in mind that is that every site is unique: regulatory, hydrology, river systems are very complex. It’s impossible to re-create a project in another place due to the dynamic nature and complexity of river systems. We want to meet your goals.

A WWP is defined as a recreational improvement in a river that creates a hydraulic jump (standing wave). The goal is to create a place where people can enjoy the features in a short stretch of river, so they can easily go up and down, and keep the use in a concentrated area. These parks are usually started by whitewater kayakers but WWPs are successful not just because of kayakers but because they have a lot of appeal to a lot of different people (families, kids, surfers). They allow for “passive recreation”. They are about opening up the river corridor to the community, and the benefits ripple out and include economic, social, cultural, and habitat benefits.

*Examples:*

Truckee River , Reno, NV: Done in 2003 on old diversion dam, now a series of waves. Has transformed downtown Reno. Hosts competitions and events. Kayaks, tubes, many users with a tremendous amount of economic benefit.

San Marcus, TX: Changed diversion dam into WWP, but it still acts as a diversion dam.

Great Miami River, Dayton, Ohio: Was a low head dam, built to slow the river down so the city lights would twinkle on the surface. There were several drownings at the site. The dam was partially removed, made safe, and into a WWP that has incredible benefit to the community. It is an industrial, rust belt community and the city wanted a draw to young people to come and stay.

Arkansas River Salida, Colorado: Working on WWP since 2000. River was inaccessible, “dirty and dangerous” , straightened by railroad, armored with rip rap. Provided access and habitat benefits with WWP. The river became a gathering place for the community. It totally turned around.

Kelly’s WWP in Cascade, ID: Diversion dam to WWP, safety liability to community asset.

Missoula, MT: WWP, river surfers have become a bit part of these parks.

*Things to consider for Leavenworth WWP:* Leavenworth is already attracting visitors, may not want more people. But, I have seen benefits to local people and community members of all kinds. Lots of kids, families, as well as surfers and kayakers. Community gathering place. Also seen improved habitat, with trout holding in the pools created by features.

**Mason Lacey, Site Assessment Presentation:** I’m here to talk about site assessment. Our team (RE and P, PAR, CCNRD) was there April 7th – 9th and visited potential sites. Wenatchee river 1500-2000 cfs

The first stage is the site assessment, we haven’t gotten to the prioritizing step yet. This is the information gathering stage, and a big part of that is input from the community.

*Factors we consider in a site assessment:* public access, hydraulic gradient (drop), safety, habitat impacts/opportunities (have no net ecological impact), geomorphology (bed/bank material), existing infrastructure (i.e. bathrooms, near downtown for economic stimulus).

*Wenatchee River:* Water peaks in May/June, existing play boating in those months. One of the goals is to make some usable features year round, in summer and fall.

*6 potential sites we visited:* Tumwater Dam, Historic Mill Dam at Barn Beach, Dryden Dam, Cashmere

River Front Park, Wenatchee River County Park, and Walla Walla Point Park.

Tumwater Dam: 30 feet of head (drop), which is twice as much as any other site we’ve done. Its constrained, with Hwy 2, and steep slopes on either side. Class 5 rapids up and downstream (safety concern). No existing infrastructure (restaurants, etc). Would be challenging and expensive

Historic Mill Dam, Barn Beach in Leavenworth: 2 feet hydraulic drop. Limits it to one “high performance feature”. Safe upstream, some class 3 below but opportunities to exit the river. Already gets a lot of use. Opportunity to clean up old concrete and debris around from old dam. River doesn’t have a lot of lateral migration, that is the river is staying in place, so that is good from an engineering standpoint.

Dryden Dam: Fish, irrigation, and multiple uses: Fish ladder, with broodstock collection sites on each side. Irrigation diversion on river left, tribal fishing rights and platforms.

WDFW and Chelan PUD joined us in the visit so we could learn how the dam is currently used and take that into account.

Dam presents an extreme safety hazard on river right. Dam makes a “reverse roller” which is not a natural river feature. These have been called “drowning machines”, even if you are wearing a life jacket. Rafting companies portage the dam. One documented fatality in 2016.

WDFW owns river right (public access), the site has a good amount of hydraulic gradient for creating features, and there is an opportunity to mitigate hazard.

Multiple players/uses are a big obstacle: broodstock collection, irrigation, tribal fishing rights, important spawning grounds upstream. WDFW, PUD, tribe need abundant access so it would be hard to develop as a WWP where community can “park and play”.

Alternative option could be to retrofit the dam to mitigate safety hazard and allow rafters to go over safely. Make it a run of the river feature. There is an opportunity to reduce risk, but there are a lot of challenges.

Cashmere River Front Park: Existing infrastructure and river access (parking, bathrooms, etc), next to downtown Cashmere, would be a huge benefit to town. Enough hydraulic gradient.

Issues: main flow is on river left, not river right where public property is. Presents an existing challenge at boat ramp when taking out of river. To make features on river right you would be fighting against the river flow, which is very challenging from an engineering point of view. River migration is high here, which also makes engineering features that would stay in the long term difficult (river might fill them in).

Met with the Cashmere Administrator and visited 3 other city owned sites -*Compost site*: existing hydraulic gradient, but really high banks so access difficult, and no infrastructure. *Mission Creek confluence*: existing wave “Granny’s”. Site isn’t set up great for a park. *Wastewater Treatment plant:* Not enough drop, lack of infrastructure.

Wenatchee River County Park: Public property with infrastructure. 3.8 foot hydraulic drop, enough to make 2 good features. Like Cashmere, a constraint is the river flow is on the opposite bank than the infrastructure. Bed is natural material, would want to make something that would benefit the habitat and could get permitted, but that would be challenging.

Walla Walla Point Park, Columbia River: You need river velocity to make a WWP. This site is pretty flat. I don’t think there is enough velocity for a surf feature. If someone is there at a certain flow and see’s more velocity send a picture!

**Randy Goetz**, **Habitat Restoration Potential Presentation**: I Work with a stream habitat consulting firm out of Hood River, but was born and raised in Cashmere. All this information is extremely preliminary. There is habitat potential and challenges at each site.

*Habitat considerations*:

-Do no harm. Preserve fish passage, existing habitat, spawning ground awareness.

-Habitat features incorporated into park design: incorporate elements and habitat potential with the park footprint

-Habitat improvement outside of park feature footprint.

*Gathered information from*:

-Habitat resources (Upper Columbia Salmon Recovery Board guiding documents and Reach Assessments)

-Stakeholder data (WDFW, PUD, Yakama Nation Fisheries)

Tumwater Dam:

-Outside of both lower and upper Wenatchee reach assessments.

-Naturally confined and steep, mainly a salmon migration corridor not spawning corridor.

-Little potential for habitat development.

Barn Beach Mill Site:

-In reach assessment.

-Instream and off channel potential, alcove habitat, floodplain connectivity improvement.

-Constraints are high public use and existing summer chinook and/or coho redds.

Dryden Dam :

-Multiple habitat projects happening immediately upstream at the mouth of Peshastin Creek

-Habitat improvement limited by infrastructure and high traffic

-Still some instream and off stream habitat enhancement potential

-Salmon redds upstream

Cashmere River Front

-Limited potential due to floodplain development, confinement, and gradient

Monitor Park:

-Limited potential due to confinement, gradient, floodplain development

-Some in channel, off channel, alcove, and side channel habitat potential

Walla Walla:

-Outside reach assessment

-Constrained by intensive use (swimming, boating, etc)

-Potential for large margin habitat install and off channel, but again use is big constraint.

**Chat Box (in italics) and Q and A:**

*I visited the Salida park last year, it is so rad! I was a guide back in the 90's on the Arkansas and it has made a significant impact on the local community!*

*From Lance - Wildwater River Guides to Everyone: 07:22 PM*

*The Dryden Dam site, which he is currently talking about, may have been the cause of the most recent commercial river fatality*

*From Jennifer Hadersberger to Everyone: 07:36 PM*

*the thought behind this location was that features can be created by an artificial hydraulic shooting air to the surface? maybe this is not the case*

*From Erin McKay CCNRD to Everyone: 07:37 PM*

*That was discussed but the cost can be pretty prohibitive for the infrastructure required to move that much water.*

**Erin:** Mason can you address Jennifer’s question about the mechanized wave at Walla Walla?

**Mason Lacey**: It’s an option but extremely expensive, it takes lots of energy to pump water. Users would have to pay to get into the park. Whole other scale of investment. City mechanized wave just opened in Chelan.

*From Jennifer Hadersberger to Everyone: 07:44 PM*

*redds near barn beach must be summer chinook?*.

*From Lance:*

*Comment: Currently the City of Leavenworth is not happy with river users. Currently they are not allowing any companies that use the river to access any city property due to the numerous complaints from locals about tubing and other non-guided activities*

**Erin:** Regarding this topic, Jennifer is heading up with CCNRD a river recreation study with the City of Leavenworth to look at some options with the heavy use. So this is a good time to think about added impacts of what this park would be in that sense (use) but also creative ideas to improve impacts.

*Jennifer - can you speak to the site selection process?*

**Erin:** The comments in recreation plan were directed towards the Dryden Dam because of the hazard. But we wanted to assess all sites through all lenses and be open to all possibilities. There could be potential for increasing safety at Dryden, whether it’s just for safe recreation or a whitewater feature. We are taking public account to heart, but we really need to look at big picture and asses all the sites.

**Jennifer Hadersberger** : What I mean by this question is how are you picking which site gets advanced in design?

**Erin:** We are getting input from the community. Some emerged as higher priority with hydrology, access, higher feasibility, we will start there. We are looking for input from this group, and then we will reach out to stakeholders and agencies at each site.

The specific timeline with this feasibility study is to first formulate a matrix that includes all the criteria for a good site (infrastructure, habitat, access, public comment, etc.) and looks at all aspects of each site. This will lead to a ranking of sites, and help hone in on a few top feasibility sites. Once we have a ranking and a few top sites, we will have another community meeting to update folks, and share that ranking and rational. After that we will develop concept level design. We hope to accomplish that within the year.

*From Lance - Wildwater River Guides to Everyone: 07:57 PM*

*My wife and I own Wildwater River Guides. We are a guided outfitter in the Valley offering kayak instruction, rafting trips, and SUP trips*

*From Katelynn to Everyone: 07:58 PM*

*What is the typical timeline on a whitewater park? -Katelynn (Youth Dynamics & recreational paddleboarder)*

**Mason :** It really varies. It’s a civil project with multiple factors, ESA listed species, permitting, it can all take a frustrating long time. If you have motivated proponents and Permitting/design, it takes a few years. Sometimes it takes, like in Dayton, Ohio almost a decade from first conversation. Minimum few years, all about building and keeping momentum. Need to do it right with all permitting so doesn’t get shut down, especially with ESA species. Even if takes a little longer, it’s worth it to make sure you are doing all those steps right so it doesn’t get shut down.

**Erin**: Yes keep the momentum going and don’t give up! Stay involved.

*From Jean-Luc Robichaux to Everyone: 07:58 PM*

*This Jean-Luc Robichaux. At the Cashmere Riverfront park, would it be possible to utilize river left and river right in order to take advantage of high and low water?*

**Mason:** There is a range of options at any site. Comes down to funding and goals. There is ease of use on river right. Could do WW features on river left but wouldn’t be able to access from the right. If we are going to do improvements at the site, we would definitely need to look at deposition features - a large river event could potentially fill in features. Need to build for long term and not need to do a bunch of maintenance. There is evidence of a lot of sediment transport, evidence that it could fill in. Can look at options but may be challenging.

*From Greg Stewart (WRA) to Everyone: 07:59 PM*

*It sounds like, except for existing infrastructure, Dryden Dam is still one of the best potential sites. Am I hearing that correctly?*

**Erin:** It resembles a lot of other sites (WWPs). But it is the most complex with all the infrastructure. Potential yes, complexity and challenges yes.

**Mike Harvey**: There is an obvious need to improve safety. There is a challenge with white water features downstream (safety). Intensive access point and potential conflict with fish collection. Could also do a run of the river feature.

*Steve - Wenatchee River Alliance: a couple of the sites involved stream flow on the far side of the river, opposite from public access. Have you done any projects where you've made those conditions work?*

**Mike Harvey:** It could work yes, but reduce some of benefits and increase the risks and challenges when working inside a bend. Not impossible

*You could access the feature at the bridge upstream and take out at the ramp. Walk up the paved path and repeat. Jon Shelby private boater in Cashmere.*

**Mason:** You could do that. It would probably then be for purely play boating and river surfing. When it’s on the opposite bank, it makes it hard for events, spectating etc. You could do it and have sweet river water feature. Definitely an option

**Erin:** Cashmere still has issue of transport. Issues and opportunities at each of these sites. Thanks everyone these are really good and creative ideas.

*From 467210 to Everyone: 08:00 PM*

*Eric Barber here, I'm the director of Free Spirit Adventures. We are a non-profit in Wenatchee focused on introducing outdoor/adventure recreation and environmental ed to youth and marginalized populations in our community. My question is on access, and cost to participants.*

**Mason:** Even if you add a WWP, you can’t restrict access in a public river park. No fee to use and open to everyone

**Erin:** Something I learned from touring around with these guys is that although we have an amazing river resource in this valley, we don’t have a lot of public access as far as where people can go and enjoy the river. Definitely room for improvement in that regard. Would be great to have places where everyone can hang out on the river and enjoy it.

*From Jon Shelby to Everyone: 08:09 PM*

*From Jennifer Hadersberger to Everyone: 08:09 PM*

*Hey Erin - can I add a few thoughts if/when there's time?*

**Jennifer:** What I’ve learned is that in project management time, money or quality drive the decision. I want to encourage the county and consultants to think big. When you think big, money will come behind it. Take time and be patient. For example, our White Pine restoration site on Nason Creek took about a decade to build. We had the idea and made many site visits, but we realized we can’t make a decision until we know what to do with the infrastructure. We realized before we did anything we needed to figure out what to do with the powerlines in the floodplain. So we worked with Chelan PUD and they eventually moved the powerlines. Before we pick a water park site, we should do a separate alternative analysis for infrastructure. We should look at fish broodstock site at Dryden Dam. Are there any other options for the infrastructure? It warrants more investigation. The habitat and recreation potential at Dryden Dam are very high.

**Erin:** Great point thanks Jennifer.

**Mason**: Go slower and keep moving. Always a challenge with multiple agencies and stakeholders involved. Our goal is to make sure something gets built and keep it moving. At a minimum reduce safety hazard.

Infrastructure and uses and Dryden Dam: irrigation diversion on river left, Native American fishing access point with fishing platforms, broodstock collection on both sides.

*The Island next to the ramp is moving upstream, as islands do, and that ramp has significantly less water than 9 years ago when we began operating. I’m sure some of the other locals here may have better incite on that*

*insight\**

*From Jon Shelby to Everyone: 08:18 PM*

*They are already collecting brood stock on the left bank collection site. @Dryden*

*There is also access above and below the right bank collection site.*

*From Kirsten to Everyone: 08:18 PM*

*Ben Jordan here, avid kayaker. Just some comments: Seems like the best location to create a downtown whitewater park like the kind Mike depicted in Salida and Buena Vista, CO would be in downtown Leavenworth. Only 2 ft of drop though. Perhaps a more intermediate feature. Sounds like there will not be an option for multiple features there. Dryden dam obviously needs to come down anyway, so maybe its best for the FIRST park. I'd love to see the county build multiple features. My preference: 1. A tuber-friendly feature in Leavenworth. 2. Dryden dam fix 3. Monitor park high performance features. Thanks for all your hard work! Stoked on this project!!*

*From Greg Stewart (WRA) to Everyone: 08:19 PM*

*Well said Jennifer, agreed.*

**Erin:** if folks have more questions, we are welcoming input and you can contact me

*Was Rodeo hole considered?*

**Erin**: For places that have wave features already, we don’t really want to alter them from what they currently offer. They are already providing value to the community. But if people have input please let us know. Those are the thoughts at Rodeo hole and happy wave.

**Mason:** if it’s working well don’t fix it. We could improve access to the river and do bank work

*Great work at hand, good luck. Yakima River Runners supports your efforts!*

*From Lance - Wildwater River Guides to Everyone: 08:24 PM*

*How do I raise a hand?*

**Lance** – I’m with Wildwater River Guides. The original driving force was Dryden Dam site with the hazard there. Currently the City of Leavenworth is trying to figure out how to get rid of tubing, because of companies that offer non guided trips and the over use that causes. We only offer guided trips, but the city is viewing us all the same. They are trying to get rid of all non-guided trips and penalizing guided trips. Some of the community issues around rodeo hole is that the local landowners say WDFW just has an easement, and are pushing back on the public use. Dryden dam is a death feature on arguably the most popular run in Washington.

*From Zach to Everyone: 08:24 PM*

*When you look at access, not just parking should be considered. For instance for those that don't live in Leavenworth I would consider it unaccessible for 5-6 months of the year (and those would be the months most people would use the park) due to the absolute lack of parking anywhere in town and long traffic backups just to get to town.*

*From 467210 to Everyone: 08:24 PM*

*Thanks for your work. Let us know if there's ways we can help.*

*From Amanda Barg to Everyone: 08:28 PM*

*The bladder is actually for fish to use for the fish ladders/fish collection facilities*

**Erin:** Stay tuned, we will reach out when there is more to report and as we work on the matrix of sites in the next couple months. In the mean town reach out to me with your question and comments.