



Confederated Tribes and Bands
of the Yakama Nation

Established by the
Treaty of June 9, 1855

September 10, 2021

Erin McKay
Senior Natural Resource and Recreation Specialist
Chelan County Natural Resources Department
Sent Via Email

Comments on Proposed Whitewater Park

Dear Erin:

Yakama Nation staff have reviewed the Feasibility Report (FR) on a potential Wenatchee River whitewater park. Based on that review and our collective knowledge of Wenatchee River systems and infrastructure, aquatic habitat, and public river use the Yakama Nation is strongly opposed to the idea of any whitewater park on the Wenatchee River. Our primary concerns include: potentially increasing an already significant amount of recreational river use throughout the Wenatchee Basin, impacts to Yakama Nation traditional fishing sites, potential impacts to various lifecycles of ESA and culturally significant salmon species, a general lack of high quality aquatic habitat, and significant existing infrastructure with already complex uses.

Site Specific Comments

Tumwater Dam

The YN agrees with the FR. This location is too dangerous and the dam is needed for fisheries management.

Historic Mill Dam in Leavenworth

The YN agrees with the FR that the site is probably not well suited hydraulically. There is a high volume of spawning salmon in the area, both coho and summer Chinook.

Dryden Dam

The Yakama Nation Tribal fishing platforms are mentioned in the FR; however, those sites are usually selected for specific hydraulic conditions which attract fish into proximity of the scaffolds. The proposed changes to the dam would almost certainly change those conditions and likely impact tribal fishers. In addition, it is hard to imagine how putting a water park in close proximity to fishing scaffolds would have anything but negative impacts to consistent successful fishing. Dryden Dam is also

the priority trapping location for Mid-Columbia Coho Reintroduction Project broodstock collections. Approximately 75-80% of the programs adult collection goals come from the Dryden traps.

Cashmere Riverfront Park

The YN agrees with the FR that structures placed on river-right would quickly fill in with sediment and be unusable.

Wenatchee River County Park

Difficult thalweg position similar to CRM. Concerns that structures may impede fish passage during low flow.

Walla Walla Point Park

Agree it's not feasible due to hydraulics (lack of velocity.)

Discussion

Overall, a waterpark would be yet another hindrance to the Wenatchee River's fisheries resource and the Yakama Nation's direct interests. A whitewater park will bring more river users to an already overcrowded (hundreds of floaters on the Upper Wenatchee and Icicle Rivers per day) river, which will certainly have negative impacts to aquatic life. Potential issues include trampling of salmon redds, increased stress on fish due to constant presence of river users, potential delays in migrating and spawning of ESA listed and culturally important salmon and steelhead runs, and impacts to current and potential tribal fishing sites.

The Wenatchee River is currently lacking in high quality habitat and habitat restoration has been generally limited by recreation uses. For this reason, we do not feel that increasing river use will result in positive steps toward implementation of needed habitat work.

There is mention of using bypasses for fish but the hydraulics created by these types of parks would appear to be an attraction for salmon and steelhead to ascend which could lead to delays and impacts as mentioned above. Previous waterparks mentioned in the FS were in areas with non anadromy streams where accommodations were with various trout species and are not likely a good indicator for the Wenatchee River

The Yakama Nation is a sovereign Fisheries Co-manager and the Wenatchee River is within The Tribe's Ceded Territory. Our interests in this discussion cannot be ignored. We hope that these comments will help guide future decisions on the feasibility of a potential Wenatchee River whitewater park.

If you require clarification of any of the points, concerns, or comments as presented in this letter, please coordinate with Yakama Nation Fisheries staff; Brandon Rogers (rogb@yakamafish-nsn.gov) or David Blodgett (blod@yakamafish-nsn.gov).

Sincerely,



Philip Rigdon
Superintendent
Yakama Nation
Department of Natural Resources