



# Cowlitz Indian Tribe

September 12, 2023

Ms. Marla Koberstein  
Department of Ecology  
Water Quality Program  
PO Box 47600  
Olympia, WA 98504-7600

Submitted online via Department of Ecology comment form

**Re: Comments on Proposed Outstanding Resource Water Designation for the Green River**

Dear Ms. Koberstein:

On behalf of the Cowlitz Indian Tribe, I write today in strong support of the proposed Tier III(A) outstanding resource water designation for the Green River. This designation will help to safeguard the unique and exceptional qualities of the upper Green River and its tributaries for generations to come.

The Cowlitz Indian Tribe is a federally recognized Indian Tribe of southwest Washington and northern Oregon. The Green River, part of the Cowlitz River basin, flows through our aboriginal homelands. The Cowlitz People have a deep cultural and spiritual connection with this landscape, based on thousands of years of continuous occupancy and a strategic seasonal round of resource acquisition. Clean water and healthy, harvestable populations of fish, wildlife, and plants are integral to our culture and way of life.

The proposed Green River outstanding resource water designation encompasses public lands within the Mount St. Helens National Monument and other federal lands of the Gifford Pinchot National Forest. This rich and resilient watershed lies in the shadow of *Lawetlat'la* (Mount St. Helens). It is a rare example today of relatively pristine conditions.

The Green River supports myriad culturally and ecologically significant species and habitats. Fall Chinook, winter steelhead, and other aquatic species depend on its cool, clean water. The Green River is an eligible Wild and Scenic River and a designated wild steelhead gene bank. Its upper reaches are home to wetlands, riverine habitats, remnant old growth forest, abundant game, and more. Fish and wildlife downstream of the proposed outstanding resource water designation also stand to benefit from its protections.

Under the state's Antidegradation policy, a Tier III(A) outstanding resource water designation is the highest level of protection assigned to any waterbody. We believe that such a designation is appropriate for the upper watershed of the Green River and its tributaries and would formally recognize the importance of these vital yet vulnerable waters to the state of Washington, area Tribes, recreationists, and local communities.

Thank you for considering these comments. For questions concerning this letter, please contact Dalton Fry, Director of Natural Resources, or Christina Donehower, Natural Resources Policy Analyst. Dalton can be reached at [dfry@cowlitz.org](mailto:dfry@cowlitz.org) or (360) 575-6225, and Christina can be reached at [cdonehower@cowlitz.org](mailto:cdonehower@cowlitz.org) or (360) 506-1848.

Sincerely,

Patricia Kinswagaiser

Patricia Kinswagaiser (Sep 12, 2023 14:08 EDT)

Patty Kinswa-Gaiser

Cowlitz Tribal Chairwoman