

Marla Koberstein
Department of Ecology
PO Box 47696
Olympia, WA 98504

August 25, 2023

Department of Ecology,

I am writing in support of designation of Soap Lake and 3 river sections as Outstanding Resource Waters of Washington, which will help protect these valuable bodies of water from further degradation. I hope to see many more bodies of water designated in the near future, as well as expanded protections for all bodies of water.

I am a wildlife biologist, having worked in the natural resource management realm for many years in Washington. I am aware of the many laws, policies and regulations we have in place to safeguard our natural environment, but I am also aware these fall short too often. Our waterways are home to countless species, they provide food and recreation for people, and their adjacent upland habitat provides critical habitat and corridors for wildlife.

I am a member of the Soap Lake Conservancy and assisted with the nomination of this lake due to its remarkable qualities. I have read numerous research articles discussing the unique qualities, unique lifeforms, mineral diversity and concentrations, and geologic features that warrant special protection for this lake and its ecosystem. I also recognize the importance of this lake to Native American Tribes, and to people who seek therapeutic benefits.

The sections of Cascade, Green and Napeequa rivers also deserve designation as Outstanding Resource Waters due to their remarkable qualities. A significant percentage of our rivers, streams, creeks, lakes and wetlands in Washington are polluted or otherwise altered to the extent they no longer contain historic flora and fauna diversity or water quality. This, in turn, affects terrestrial flora and fauna including people. These degradations affect economies and can be considered theft from future generations and all non-human lifeforms.

Research continues to reveal the intertwined fates of ecosystem components and the detrimental impacts of human-caused habitat loss and degradation. We must take action to mitigate impacts and halt further damage. I see these designations as a first-step toward conservation of these natural resources, and hope DOE and others will join me in taking more substantial steps to ensure conservation of our waters and wetlands becomes a reality.

Please accept my letter of support for Soap Lake, Cascade River, Green River and Napeequa River ORW designations, and thank you for the substantial work you have performed to see this process forward. We must all do more to permanently preserve and protect these invaluable natural resources.

Sincerely,

Ella Rowan