

Blaine Snow

I am writing today in support of the proposed rulemaking to designate parts of the Cascade, Green, and Napeequa River systems as Outstanding Resource Waters (ORW).

As Washington State grapples with a booming population, the plight of our endangered salmon and orca, and the impacts of the climate crisis, now is the time to conserve our most valued freshwater sources for future generations, using all available tools. ORW designation is consistent with the billions of dollars that Washington has already invested in salmon recovery, river restoration, and ensuring clean drinking water. It is a critical step to protect what we have while we continue to invest in the hard work of restoring what we have lost.

The Cascade, Green, and Napeequa Rivers are incontrovertible candidates to be the first rivers to gain ORW designation in Washington. All three rivers—each flowing through protected areas—meet multiple regulatory criteria by exhibiting excellent water quality, providing unique recreational value, and having statewide ecological significance.

As a Washingtonian, I want to see the state's precious freshwater resources safeguarded. Designating these river systems would benefit Washington State's communities, wildlife, salmon, and local economies, and honor tribal treaty rights. I strongly urge Ecology to designate the Cascade, Green, and Napeequa River systems as the state's first Outstanding Resource Waters. As a 4th generation resident of WA State, I have shared decades of recreation in our mountains and waterways with family and friends. Nothing is more important to us than clear, clean mountain water and the wild places it comes from. I now have grandsons who are learning to fish in our rivers and care for the land and health of our precious river systems. But their future with these river systems is in jeopardy as climate change, wildfires, logging, and recreational overuse combine to disrupt the ecosystem balance. Their father who's a fish biologist for WA Fish and Wildlife sees how climate change drought/deluge cycles degrade our waterways and fish populations.