

Martha Bray

I am very much in favor of the designation of the Cascade River as an Outstanding Resource Water. I have lived in rural Skagit County for forty-five years. I have been in awe of the beauty and vitality of the Cascade River from the first time I saw it. We are so fortunate to still have this relatively pristine river with outstanding water quality that is so important to downstream communities, and to fish and wildlife habitat, including endangered Chinook salmon. It is one of the last truly undisturbed large rivers in Skagit County. We need to do our part to try to keep it that way, knowing that increased recreational pressures, combined with climate change, are already causing enough stressors to this important watershed.

With all the public resources going into restoration of the State's rivers and streams, here we have the rare opportunity to protect a river that needs no intervention, except to prevent unnecessary future human impacts. We all know that the cost of protection is a small fraction of the cost of restoration. And many human impacts once taken, can not truly be restored.

In addition, since all the land within the proposed designation is in federal ownership, it would have no impact on private landowners. It would, however, help ensure that the water resources will be protected when actions are taken by federal agencies, such as expanding or rebuilding recreational infrastructure. Lastly, I believe that the concerns expressed by special interests such as the timber industry are exaggerated. I do not think that this proposal will have a significant impact on sustainable forestry activities; and regardless, there are a few fragile places like the upper Cascade River that should receive additional environmental review.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.