

Rick Schoen

I am a long term river paddler in Washington and I truly appreciate the value and many benefits of Washington's pristine rivers! These waterways provide a multitude of ecosystem services including clean drinking water for communities, habitat that is critical to health and abundance of fish and wildlife species, scenic beauty that is a defining attribute of our quality of life, and numerous recreational opportunities for residents and visitors including fishing, boating, hiking and camping.

Outdoor recreation supports \$26.5 billion in annual expenditures and 264,000 jobs throughout Washington State and clean water is critical to this economic sector.

Protecting unimpaired headwaters is critical to the health of our rivers and everything downstream. The Clean Water Act recognizes the unique value of waterways of exceptional water quality and provides an opportunity for states to identify waterways as Outstanding Resource Waters.

The rivers being considered, the first for Washington State, represent outstanding state resources due to their extraordinary water quality, ecological, and recreational values.

Although Washington has an abundance of high-quality waters that are important to protect, to date Ecology has not designated any Outstanding Resource Waters. Other western states, including Oregon, Colorado, New Mexico, and Arizona have taken advantage of this opportunity under the Clean Water Act to protect priority rivers.

The Cascade, Green, and Napeequa rivers in Washington State all meet multiple regulatory criteria for Outstanding Resource Waters designation and are deserving of protection as Outstanding Resource Waters. All three of the river systems are pristine and located in protected areas; have both excellent water quality and regionally unique recreational value; and have statewide ecological significance.

Designation of these river systems would benefit the state's people, its economy, its wildlife, and its salmon. It is essential that the state take steps now to protect some of its remaining high-quality rivers that provide numerous benefits to Washingtonians.

As impacts from climate change become increasingly more evident, protecting our high-quality rivers and streams is an essential investment for our future.

Thanks for your attention to these important rivers.