

# Burden-Brant Families

My family and I (four tax-paying and voting citizens of this state) understand that your agency, the Washington State Department of Ecology, is considering the establishment of the first Outstanding Resource Waters in our state. We are excited that the following: Cascade (Skagit watershed), Green (Toutle watershed), and Napeequa (Wenatchee) rivers have been nominated. They are wonderfully appropriate for this designation.

We are very supportive because the Outstanding Resource Waters designation will protect the existing high water quality for the wildlands and wildlife and safeguard this freshwater from future degradation. We applaud the protection of these waters, as the designation will help ensure that these streams retain their high quality and preserve their exceptional ecological and recreational values.

We have been white water enthusiasts for decades, and while we do not currently participate in paddling these waterways, we appreciate that they provide a multitude of ecosystem services. These include: clean drinking water for downstream communities, healthy habitat that is critical to the abundance and diversity of fish and wildlife, healthy forests, and scenic beauty that is a defining attribute of our quality of life. We also appreciate the numerous recreational opportunities for residents and visitors that include fishing, paddling, hiking and camping.

We agree that protecting unimpaired headwaters is critical to the health of our rivers, riparian systems, and everything downstream. We are grateful that the Clean Water Act recognizes the unique value of waterways of exceptional water quality and provides this opportunity for states to identify them.

Although Washington has an abundance of high-quality waters that are important to protect, we understand that to date DOE has not designated any Outstanding Resource Waters. We learned that other western states, including Oregon, Colorado, New Mexico, and Arizona have taken advantage of this opportunity under the Clean Water Act to protect their priority rivers. We think it is high time that Washington State does the same.

We understand the Cascade, Green, and Napeequa Rivers in Washington State all meet the multiple regulatory criteria for Outstanding Resource Waters designation and are deserving of protection. All three of the river systems are pristine and located in protected areas; have excellent water quality, regionally unique recreational value, and have statewide ecological significance. We hope you will find more to nominate for this protection.

As impacts from climate change become increasingly more evident, we believe protecting our high-quality rivers and streams and the forests and wildlands that they support is an essential investment for our future.

Please make it so!

Dan and Lys Burden

Mike and Dan Brant