

# Robert Edwards

I support Soap Lake's Tier III (B) Outstanding Resource Water designation

Soap Lake, a highly mineralized lake formed in the wake of the last Ice Age, is renowned for its exceptional healing properties--something I can personally attest to and is the reason I moved to the Soap Lake area. Since ancient times the lake has been an essential destination for indigenous culture and gatherings in what is now Eastern Washington State. Following WWI and until the development of more modern drugs, the VA determined the lake's waters and its underlying mud to be an important treatment for former soldiers suffering from Berger's disease, brought on by gas warfare in the trenches. Soap Lake continues to attract people from around the world, who are drawn to the lake's unique and healing mineral composition and to the relief they find in its waters. However, the mineral content of Soap Lake has steadily lessened in concentrations over time due to environment challenges such as agricultural and logging pollution and such related activities that have viewed the lake as an expendable casualty in the cost of doing business. Some of this is the legacy of a lingering frontier mindset that sees Native history and cultural traditions as irrelevant and irreplaceable treasures of the western American landscape as something to be either exploited or as an obstacle. Also, unfortunate additions of fresh water over the years and Climate Change are also having an effect on the lake and its fragile biome.

Soap Lake is exceptional because:

1. of its unique habitat, which is not only regionally rare but rare on planet Earth, and offers statewide ecological significance.
2. of its value as a recreational destination and presents opportunities for eco-tourism as a way of diversifying the local rural economy.
3. of the distinct mineral content of Soap Lake, which presents one of the highest mineral concentrations of its kind in the world and offers relief to sufferers of a variety of skin conditions and other ailments.

Soap Lake is not merely just another lake. It is a rare treasure of this Earth and an often overlooked wonder in our State that cries out for acknowledgement and protection. Therefore, I stand firmly with the Soap Lake Conservancy and the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation in urging decisive action to safeguard Soap Lake against any further degradation or incroachments. Working together, we have this window of opportunity to save the lake for our children and generations to come.