

Dee Caputo

I am a Grant County Resident who loves Soap Lake. I am writing in support of Soap Lake's designation as an Outstanding Resource Water - Tier III(B)., Soap Lake has unique, mineral-rich water created by the geology of the region concentrating the minerals in the water and the mud., This is a regionally unique recreational value and destination for healing nature of water. Used since pre-historic times to heal and rejuvenate people living here., The layers of water that do not mix in Soap Lake. This is unique. The chemically stratified layer of naturally formed meromictic lakes ... has evolved uniquely adapted species., This unique habitat that is a rare example of its kind with bacteria only found in this lake. Researchers with Montana State University have been awarded a series of grants totalling \$6.4 million to identify ways algae can be used for biofuels and other products as it removes carbon dioxide from the air. In addition to other research being conducted on the water and mud in the lake., Helping keep the lake healthy will help the economy of Soap Lake. The minerals keep the water from excess forming toxic algae.

I DEFINITELY support Soap Lake,Ãs Tier III(B) Outstanding Resource Water designation.

Soap Lake, a highly mineralized lake formed following the Ice Age, is renowned for its exceptional healing properties. The lake has always been an essential destination for indigenous culture and gathering. Soap Lake also attracts people from all across our country and the entire globe for the lake's unique mineral content, which provides exceptional recreational and rejuvenation opportunities leading to relief from various ailments. In fact, early arrival and settlement history beyond first peoples' experience in the Soap Lake area is rich in stories about the rise in resorts and medical establishments. These businesses and operations were created purposefully to entice long distance visitors to come share in the known benefits of Soap Lake. While today's version is much less organized, Soap Lake is still on the map for many travelers seeking respite and recovery in much the same fashion.

In addition, Soap Lake and its community serve as vital pieces to the historical and cultural values to be discovered along the Coulee Corridor National Scenic Byway by the traveling public that seeks such experiences when visiting this part of Washington State. Tremendous federal, state and local investments along SR 17 and SR 155 within the counties and communities that abut these routes have produced positive public awareness and appreciation of this spectacular National Scenic Byway. This designation helps to attract visitors to the area, with Soap Lake deriving direct benefit from increased traffic supported by state and national marketing campaigns. Soap Lake's water quality status ties directly into the recreational and environmental enjoyment of travelers who are drawn to the byway.

Another faction of visitors is enticed to the area because of its known connection to the Ice Age Floods which dominate this area's geologic history and present day natural and cultural functions. Dry Falls to the north of Soap Lake is listed as one of one hundred most important geologic sites in the world, designated by world class geologic professionals as of 2022. Soap Lake is the southern terminus of that geologic feature, having been where those falls originated in that part of the Ice Age Floods system.

The Ice Age Floods Institute, a non- profit organization that consists of 11 local chapters across 4

states within the Pacific Northwest, is working with the National Park Service to develop an IAF Geologic Trail to span parts of Montana, Idaho, Washington and Oregon. Dry Falls and Soap Lake are key locations within this project. In return for the investment of this planning effort, local communities, including Soap Lake, stand to inherit future abundance from economic development endeavors. Superior outdoor recreational opportunities abound in this area and along the developing trail. In order for such an investment to pay off, other investments must be identified and implemented to retain and enhance our natural and built environments. Soap Lake is an excellent candidate for such an investment as this designation would provide.

The mineral content of Soap Lake is diminishing due to environmental challenges, including pollution, climate change, and overall loss of mineral content. Please help protect the remaining minerals and mud in the lake. I support the Soap Lake Conservancy and the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation in taking decisive action to safeguard Soap Lake. I ask that Washington State Department of Ecology take this request seriously to apply the Outstanding Resource Water designation. This approach should help inspire the corrective actions needed to improve and enhance Soap Lake by relying on appropriate and necessary protection measures. Please help. Soap Lake is an exceptional resource located within our local landscape that also has relevance well beyond our county and the nation.

Soap Lake is exceptional because:

1. the unique habitat, which is regionally rare and an exceptional statewide ecological significance
2. value as a recreation destination
3. the distinct mineral content of Soap Lake. One of the highest concentrations of mineral water in the world.

Soap Lake is a remarkable natural treasure, and through collective action and public engagement, we can protect and preserve its unique mineral content and ecological value.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment. I hope you will find Soap Lake worthy of this designation, and take steps to include it within the Tier III(B) Outstanding Resource Water category for all of us, including future generations to come.

Dee Caputo, FAICP Senior Planner, retired WA State Department of Commerce/Growth Management Services Member, Coulee Corridor Consortium Member, Ice Age Floods Institute, Lower Grand Coulee Local Chapter Member, Traveling Public and Outdoor Recreational Enthusiast