

Anne Winkes

I fully support the designation of the upper Cascade River as a Washington State Outstanding Resource Water (ORV).

Per the federal Clean Water Act, pristine waterways that have exceptional water quality, are of statewide ecological importance, and/or have unique recreational value can be designated as an outstanding state resource. The upper Cascade River clearly meets all three criteria for designation as an Outstanding Resource Water.

The Cascade River originates in the South Cascade Glacier on Sentinel Peak in the North Cascades National Park and then flows through the wilderness of the North Cascade National Park, Glacier Peak Wilderness and the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest before emptying into the Skagit River. You can't get much more pristine than that.

The Cascade River's water quality is exceptional. Its cold (42 degrees), clear, fast-moving waters provide excellent habitat for salmon and other wildlife, including Harlequin Ducks, whose population numbers in Washington State are low per the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife. Repair of logging roads and culverts in the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest have improved the Cascade's water quality and fish passage.

There can be no doubt that the Cascade River has unique recreational value. The many types of salmon found in the Cascade River -- including Chum, Coho, Summer Steelhead, Winter Steelhead, Rainbow trout, Summer Chinook, Coastal cutthroat, Pink, Bull trout, Sockeye and Spring Chinook -- make it important to fisherfolk and to the Upper Skagit, Swinomish and Samish Tribes. Additionally, campers and hikers enjoy recreating in its environs and whitewater paddlers enjoy the challenge of navigating its swift water.

Designating the Cascade River an OWR will not only protect the waters of the Cascade River and its tributaries, but it will also help protect the water quality of the Skagit River into which it flows. The health of the Skagit River is important not only to the residents of Skagit County who drink its water, but to the recovery of its Chinook salmon population which in turn is vital to the health of the declining Southern Resident Orca population.

In 2007, the Skagit County Commissioners approved Resolution R20070499 directing county departments to work to proactively engage in salmon recovery efforts. Skagit County continues to work with the Department of Ecology to comply with water quality standards for Skagit tributaries, ensuring that the Skagit has cool, clean water. Certainly, designating the Cascade River, one of the Skagit's tributaries, an OWR is in line with and will aid the county in its salmon recovery efforts.

In summary, for all the above reasons, I urge you to please designate the Cascade River an Outstanding Resource Water, which will ensure the protection of its waters and the waters of its tributaries, thus protecting one of our State's most extraordinary and unique watersheds.

Thank you for considering my comments.

Anne Winkes