



File Code: 5400
Date: October 2, 2019

Dave Thies, President
Columbia Gorge Audubon Society
PO Box 1393
White Salmon, WA 98672

Dear Mr. Thies,

In your letter of August 30, 2019 and separate opinion letter published in local newspapers you raised concerns about Forest Service land acquisition along the Congressionally designated Lower White Salmon Wild and Scenic River. You asked us to: Approach Weyerhaeuser and their realtor to discuss the option of public ownership; potentially use the Federal condemnation authority in negotiations with landowners; and make additional funding requests for Land and Water Conservation Fund.

I believe we share many similar interests with respect to the Lower White Salmon Wild and Scenic River and appreciate the information you conveyed regarding potential land availability.

The Forest Service's overall goal for the Lower White Salmon Wild and Scenic River is to meet the intent of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act by maintaining the current character of the river area and providing long-term protection and enhancement of its outstandingly remarkable values. The 1991 Lower White Salmon National Wild and Scenic River Management Plan lays out several strategies for river management, recognizing the Forest Service shares its governance with Klickitat County and State agencies who have jurisdiction over private lands within the Wild and Scenic River Corridor. The Plan does indeed call for the Forest Service to acquire the appropriate rights to meet its intent, as funds are available. It also notes that, in addition to acquisition of land or rights, close coordination with Klickitat County will be necessary to administer the County Shoreline Master Plan and the County Zoning Ordinance, which are key elements in protecting the river values.

Since the Wild and Scenic River designation, the Forest Service has acquired 144 acres within the corridor, allowing us to provide public access to the river at BZ Corner and Husum, and preventing additional residential development in other areas. This number is short of the hundreds of acres of land we anticipated acquiring at the time the Management Plan was developed. The scale of land acquisition has fallen short in part because it was predicated on the assumption that a three-way land exchange would be consummated between SDS Lumber Company, Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and the Forest Service. This anticipated three-way exchange was unable to be completed due to disagreement over the terms of the exchange.

As you are aware, Forest Service funding cycles for land acquisition require years of advance planning. This year's Land and Water Conservation Fund proposal will be for funding in FY2021. The high quality of projects across the country competing for these funds requires that

