

22 February 2024

To: Coos County Commissioners, Coquille OR

From: Jeffrey Jackson, Resident, Coquille OR

**RE: File Number ACU-23-074, Winter Lake Phase III Project**

Dear Commissioners,

This letter indicates support for the Beaver Slough Drainage District's and Coos Soil and Water Conservation District's application for infrastructure upgrades as outlined in the Winter Lake Phase III project. As a fish biologist with nearly 25 years of experience working for federal, state and non-profit organizations in Oregon, Alaska and California, I write to you that there is no doubt whatsoever that habitat restoration projects such as Winter Lake not only benefit salmon to a great degree, but also benefit drainage that increases use and productivity by agricultural landowners.

Recent research at Winter Lake conducted by the Coquille Watershed Association has shown how incredibly productive off-channel areas are to coho salmon. Juvenile coho move downstream and seek areas to over-winter, get out of heavy winter flows and find food and shelter. Replacing internal tidegates will facilitate water movement and help juvenile salmon find their way out of the channels and canals as water temperatures become too high later in the spring. A suite of native fish and amphibians thrive in Winter Lake: steelhead, Cutthroat trout, Pacific lamprey can all be found there seasonally. And while it is true that a variety of non-native fish are present, active water management makes this a less hospitable environment for them to flourish.

In addition to the natural resources benefits afforded by this project, Winter Lake Phase III will replace aging and non-functional infrastructure that will greatly benefit grazing and pasture management. As spring turns into summer, native fish move out of the project area, water can be drawn down, and Winter Lake goes into another mode of production – for livestock. Landowners can't turn their animals out until the land is dried out, and upgraded infrastructure will facilitate maximum use. That's the beauty of projects such as this: promote agricultural use in the summer and salmon in the winter.

Here's the bottom line: Winter Lake Phase III is completely, legally, environmentally and administratively within the scope, scale and intent of Coos County Planning and Land Use Ordinances. Landowners, natural resource specialists, fisherman and anyone who knows about fish and grazing all realize the benefits of this project. I invite the Commissioners who are opposed to this project to educate themselves by reaching out to ODFW and see first hand how the project is positively influencing the economy of Coos County.

Sincerely,

*Jeff Jackson*

Jeffrey Jackson

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Coquille OR