



State of Washington
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

South Central Region • Region 3 • 1701 South 24th Avenue, Yakima, WA 98902-5720
Telephone: (509) 575-2740 • Fax: (509) 575-2474

September 26, 2023

Jamey Ayling
Kittitas County Community Development Services
411 N. Ruby Street, Suite 2
Ellensburg, WA 98926

SUBJECT: WDFW COMMENTS ON CU-23-00003 Fowler Creek Guest Ranch

Dear Mr. Ayling,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the CU-23-00003 Fowler Creek Guest Ranch application concerning the development of various recreation facilities including cabins and trails. Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) has reviewed the application and supporting documents. Our comments are regarding the project's impact on priority fish and wildlife habitats, particularly wetlands and riparian habitats. Specifically, to ensure that if the application is approved that the development will not result in loss of Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas (FWHCA) under Kittitas County Critical Areas Ordinance (CAO).

While we appreciate that the application has identified some of the larger wetlands and streams on the property and alluded that critical areas report would be conducted, WDFW requests that a critical areas report be conducted prior to approval of a site plan to ensure that all streams and wetlands are identified, and their appropriate buffers be incorporated into the final site plan. WDFW would also request the opportunity to review and provide comments to the county on the report.

The application alludes to building of "residential habitats", trails, viewing platforms etc.. within either the stream or wetland area buffers. While WDFW is not directly opposed to this concept, it is vital that these structures do not result in a net loss of functional habitat within the wetland or riparian areas. WDFW requests that if these structures are approved, a condition be imposed that a detailed site plan be reviewed prior to any building and that either the structures themselves result in not net loss of function or that appropriate mitigation be proposed for the loss of function from these structures. Examples of loss of function include removal of overstory trees, removal of significant amounts of shrubs or understory vegetation, impervious surfaces or structures that prevent natural vegetation or functions from occurring, including that trees near these structures could now be deemed to be hazard trees. WDFW requests to be involved in the review of the site plans of trails and structures in the critical areas and evaluation of loss of function as an agency that has expertise in the FWHCA.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment and look forward to discussing this further with the county and the applicant. Please contact me at 509-607-3578 or Scott.Downes@dfw.wa.gov to discuss these concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Scott Downes". The signature is written in black ink on a light-colored background.

Scott Downes
Area Habitat Biologist

Cc:
Elizabeth Torrey, WDFW