



State of Washington
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

South Central Region • Ellensburg District Office • 1130 W. University Way, Ellensburg, WA 98926

March 17, 2021

Kelly Bacon
Planner
Kittitas County Community Development Services
411 N. Ruby Street, Ste 2
Ellensburg, WA 98926

SUBJECT: WDFW COMMENTS ON SWIFTWATER STORAGE CU-20-00006

Dear Kelly Bacon,

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) has reviewed the application materials associated with the proposed new Swiftwater Storage facility along State Route 970 near Cle Elum, and we appreciate the opportunity to comment on this project.

We are familiar with the stream and associated wetland complex along the northern boundary of this project and have been to various locations upstream and downstream of this property. This waterbody provides high quality fish habitat for numerous native fishes. The wetland characteristics also provide numerous wildlife benefits for a variety of wildlife species including amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals. We appreciate the applicants' acknowledgement of these important critical areas (Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas and Wetlands). We agree that the buffer from the edge of the wetland should be no less than 100 feet to preserve the functions and values of these important habitats. Additionally, we would be happy to provide technical assistance to further enhance the habitat within these critical areas if the proponents were interested.

While the application materials address the Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas and Wetlands on the property, they do not adequately address Frequently Flooded Areas. Nearly the entire parcel is mapped within the 100-year floodplain and yet the materials provide little information for how the site will be graded or potential compensatory floodplain mitigation measures. The flows within the wall-based channel on this property fluctuate seasonally with flows in the Yakima River. This is common with wall-based floodplain channels like the stream on this property. The water table on this property likely fluctuates in a similar manner. The depth to groundwater during all seasons will be critical to understanding the effectiveness of compensatory floodplain mitigation measures as well as stormwater treatment. The stormwater treatment area shown is adjacent to the wetland/stream buffer and we have concerns that there will not be adequate separation of the stormwater from these critical areas.

The application materials briefly mention there will be an RV repair shop and they reference traffic impacts from the primitive camping area. However, there were not enough details to understand how these facilities will be operated to evaluate whether there will be potential impacts to critical areas.

WDFW recommends the following:

- Final site grading should be available for review to understand how the changed topography may or may not impact the associated critical areas and their functions and values.

- Final stormwater management plans should clearly show that stormwater can be captured and treated without impacting groundwater or critical area buffers throughout the seasons and fluctuating water levels. Please consider using pervious surfaces, particularly in the open and covered parking areas to reduce stormwater runoff.
- Please provide additional details for the operation of the RV repair facilities and primitive campground areas so we can understand how these may or may not impact critical areas.
- Please direct lighting downward to comply with the [DarkSky](#) best practices
- When possible, please use native vegetation within the landscaping. It will provide additional wildlife benefits and in many cases is drought tolerant so will require less maintenance. WDFW will be pleased to work with the applicants to make specific recommendations based on their needs.

Please feel free to contact me at (509) 961-6639 or Jennifer.nelson@dfw.wa.gov with any questions about these comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jennifer Nelson".

Jennifer Nelson
Area Habitat Biologist