



**Washington State  
Department of Transportation**

**Paula J. Hammond**  
Secretary of Transportation

**South Central Region**  
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September 21, 2009

**RECEIVED**  
SEP 21 2009  
Kittitas County  
CDS

Kirk Holmes, Director  
Kittitas County Community Development Services  
411 N. Ruby St., Suite 2  
Ellensburg, WA 98926

RE: SnoCadia Plat Application (P-07-00058)

Dear Mr. Holmes:

Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) is submitting this letter in response to the Notice of Application for the SnoCadia on Gold Creek Long Plat and Planned Unit Development (P-07-00058). WSDOT believes the proposed project has the potential to affect the function of publicly funded WSDOT improvements and mitigation associated with the Interstate 90 Snoqualmie Pass East project (I-90 project). WSDOT owns over 300 acres of mitigation land in the Gold Creek Valley above and adjacent to the proposed development. The density and footprint of the SnoCadia development appear to reach a level of impact to the Gold Creek riparian area and the functions of WSDOT's investment where wildlife connectivity is planned for the I-90 Snoqualmie Pass East project (I-90 project). Because these impacts are undisclosed and potentially significant, we believe an Environmental Impact Statement needs to be prepared for this project.

The I-90 project plans to improve a 15-mile section of the interstate from Hyak at milepost 55.1 to Easton at milepost 70.3. The I-90 project is meeting community, regional, and statewide transportation improvement needs in a way that balances with environmental impacts of the project. Achieving this balance requires ongoing efforts by WSDOT, public agencies, and others. The improvements WSDOT is proposing for the I-90 project will reduce the barrier effect of the highway to the north/south movement of fish and wildlife in the Central Cascades. The construction of the first funded phase of the project began this summer and will continue through 2015. WSDOT anticipates that subsequent construction phases, which are currently unfunded, will occur in the future.

WSDOT, working with the US Forest Service (USFS), and other natural resource agencies such as the Washington State and US Fish and Wildlife have collaborated for nearly ten years to identify and define a broad, watershed-based mitigation strategy to allow for the expansion of I-90 on National Forest land. WSDOT identified Gold Creek as an important connectivity emphasis area because of the ecological improvement opportunities within the watershed. For example, Gold Creek represents a unique opportunity to provide fish passage and habitat improvements for threatened bull trout, which are protected under the federal Endangered Species Act. Gold Creek is presently the only remaining spawning area for this species and one of the largest watersheds in the project area. Significantly increased land use densities such as those proposed by the SnoCadia plat could adversely affect the publicly funded WSDOT investments in bridges and structures designed to address ecological connectivity improvements, impact critical ESA habitat, and affect enhancements to wetland, streams, and other restoration areas.

The efforts of WSDOT and other agencies to address complex environmental needs in the Central Cascades have been presented to the public in many forums. Those efforts are well known and consistent with federal, state, county and private efforts so that context is part of the I-90 design. We would encourage you to consider this context when working with development in high priority locations within the I-90 project area.

It is not clear to WSDOT what SnoCadia would use for points of ingress and egress to the development. As you may already know, WSDOT has received requests from Mr. Darland to convey additional easement width beyond the existing 20 foot easement that serves the Darland properties in order for him to develop his property. However, for several years WSDOT has made it clear that it is unwilling to convey any additional easement width or expand the use of the existing easement (See attached letter dated September 17, 2007). Please take into consideration WSDOT's decision on access if it has any effect on SnoCadia's development plans.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide information to Kittitas County about WSDOT's concerns regarding the potential of the SnoCadia plat application to affect the function of the publicly funded WSDOT improvements and mitigation in the I-90 project corridor. WSDOT requests that you continue to involve us and the USFS so the compatibility of local, state, and federal agency actions can be taken into consideration.

I would be happy to discuss the project and the compatibility of development with our design alternatives with you at any time. You can reach me at 509-577-1620, or Randy Giles, I-90 Project Director at 509-577-1879.

Sincerely,



Don Whitehouse  
Regional Administrator  
WSDOT South Central Region

DW:jws

cc: Randy Giles, I-90 Project Director  
Jason W. Smith, I-90 Environmental Manager  
Bill Preston, WSDOT Planning Manager  
Jen Watkins, I-90 Wildlife Bridges Coalition



**Washington State  
Department of Transportation**

**Douglas B. MacDonald**  
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September 17, 2007

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John W. Milne  
Inslee, Best, Doezie, and Ryder, PS  
Symetra Financial Center, Suite 1900  
P. O. Box 9016  
Bellevue, WA 98009-9016

SEP 18 2007  
SCR I-90 OFFICE  
DOCUMENT CONTROL

RE: Snoqualmie Pass – Old Sunset Highway Right-of-way - Utility District Easement Request

Dear Mr. Milne:

I am writing in response to your letter of August 24, 2007 which requested an easement across Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) property to serve the Darland properties in the Gold Creek area off of Interstate 90, east of Snoqualmie Pass.

WSDOT acknowledges that the Darland properties consisting of four parcels have a 20-foot wide easement for ingress and egress as shown in Exhibit A of your letter dated August 24, 2007. However, the Department is not willing to convey any additional easement width or expand the use of the existing easement beyond serving the original four parcels for ingress and egress. The WSDOT is willing to consider a utility easement within the existing 20 foot easement, as long as the use of the property is consistent with WSDOT planned actions in the Gold Creek area.

WSDOT, the U.S. Forest Service and 10 other federal, state and local resource agencies have collaborated for over ten years to identify and define a watershed-based design and mitigation strategy necessary to allow for the expansion of Interstate 90 within the National Forest boundaries. The Gold Creek Valley continues to be identified as a crucial watershed whereby investments in bridges and structures, as well as wetland and streams, are needed for ecological and hydrologic connectivity, and are being planned as part of the highway expansion. WSDOT published a Draft Environmental Impact Statement in July 2005. The response to our DEIS was quite extensive with over 3300 comments received. The vast majority of those responses were in favor of a public investment that is consistent with the goals and objectives of the Forest Plan(s) and meeting ecological connectivity objectives. WSDOT is currently developing a final Environmental Impact Statement for the interstate expansion project, I-90 Snoqualmie Pass East, which will be published in 2008.

If the Snoqualmie Pass Easement Utility District wants to pursue using the existing easement to place utilities to serve the four existing parcels owned by Darland, please contact Larry Hook, my Real Estate Manager, at (509) 577-1651.

Sincerely,

Don Whitehouse, P.E.  
Regional Administrator

cc: Brian White, Project Director  
Jason Smith, Environmental Manager  
Larry Hook, Real Estate Manager