

5/1/18
Material from
Gary Williams

Colonel Aaron L. Dorf
U. S. Army Corps of Engineers
P.O. Box 2946
Portland, OR 97208-2946

Colonel Aaron L. Dorf,

I am writing on behalf of the McKenzie River Chamber of Commerce. Our members, visitors, and area residents have expressed concerns about last week's change in the way mitigation trout were placed in the McKenzie River. The change breaks with a nearly 70-year tradition that forms the basis of the McKenzie River's tourism based economy.

The section of river planted last Wednesday - from Leaburg Landing to Hendricks Landing - was slightly less than ten river miles. The stocking was conducted by releasing truckloads of fish directly at the three landings, which are in the upper four miles of the McKenzie. The result was that about 60% of the river was without fish. This differs from past trout plantings that involved volunteer river guides operating the Oregon Dept. of Fish & Wildlife's "plant" boat to release fish all along that ten-mile stretch of the river. It is our fear that future similar releases of mitigation trout could severely impact the recreation angling public.

I'm sure you are aware - many people come through the McKenzie River communities to access our area's boat ramps, campgrounds and trails. In addition, people who book rooms in lodging facilities, eat in restaurants, shop in stores and support other local businesses or services that are essential to our local economy.

A big concern is that people who love to fish the McKenzie - whether from their own boats or on guided trips - will be unlikely to catch hatchery fish on long stretches of the river. In addition, many of the fish released at the landings could remain concentrated there, leading decisions by the public to quit fishing from iconic McKenzie River drift boats. Other anglers might crowd the landing leading to issues related to overstressed sanitation facilities and potential poaching problems.

All our local businesses have seen a decline in tourism since last year's fires and the landslide on Aufderheide Drive.

We recognize the Corps' commitment to meeting its mitigation responsibility for offsetting recreational opportunities impacted by the construction of the Cougar and Blue River dams. It is our belief that a solution could result if a Corps representative participates in the traditional planting process employed by ODFW and the volunteer guides - or follows along in another boat to observe. This should provide evidence that the process is both more efficient in meeting mitigation goals and guarantees better public recreational access.

Thank you in advance for your prompt attention to this issue.

Sincerely,

Nadine Scott, President

McKenzie River Chamber of Commerce