



Thomas O'Keefe, PhD
Pacific Northwest Stewardship Director
3537 NE 87th St.
Seattle, WA 98115
okeefe@amwhitewater.org

August 26, 2009

Via email: pfoley@rvcog.org

Attn: Pat Foley, Community Development Specialist
Rogue Valley Council of Governments
P.O. 3275
Central Point, OR 97502

Re: Gold Ray Dam Removal Project

Dear Members of the Rogue Valley Council of Governments:

American Whitewater is writing in support of the proposal to remove the Gold Ray Dam on the Rogue River in Oregon. We strongly support this restoration project that will provide economic, ecological, and recreational benefits to the Rogue River, one of the nation's most iconic rivers.

American Whitewater is a national non-profit 501(c)(3) river conservation organization founded in 1954. We have over 6,500 members and 100 local-based affiliate clubs, representing approximately 80,000 whitewater paddlers across the nation. American Whitewater's mission is to conserve and restore America's whitewater resources and to enhance opportunities to enjoy them safely. As a conservation-oriented paddling organization, American Whitewater has an interest in the Rogue River. A significant percentage of American Whitewater members reside in Oregon and California—a short driving distance from this river for recreation.

While this project will provide job opportunities for those involved in the removal of the dam, one of the greatest benefits of this project is the opportunity for long-term benefits to the river-based recreation industry in the Rogue River watershed. The Rogue River is a river of national significance attracting visitors from throughout the region and around the world. Several outfitters and businesses serve the visitors who come to enjoy day-use opportunities that are popular on the section immediately downstream and just upstream of Gold Ray Dam. Removing this dam will connect these sections for recreational users providing substantial benefits to businesses that depend on free-flowing rivers. Removal of this dam will also create a continuous unbroken stretch of more than 150 miles of free-flowing river extending all the way to the Pacific Ocean, representing a unique and highly valued resource of regional and national significance. This resource will enhance the quality of life for those living in the region, including several members of our organization, who are attracted to the tremendous natural assets the Rogue River provides to local communities.

American Whitewater recently supported Jackson County's grant application to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration for a restoration project grant available through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. We urge you to move this project forward and invite you to contact us if you have any questions regarding recreational benefits of a restored Rogue River. Please include our organization on the list for any future hearings or opportunities for input on this project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. O'Keefe', written over a white background.

Thomas O'Keefe, PhD
Pacific Northwest Stewardship Director