



Native Fish Society

PO Box 568

Molalla, OR 97038

503-829-6202

nativefishsociety@molalla.net

*The Voice for Native Fish*

Conserving biological diversity of native fish and protecting their habitats

---

July 10, 2009

To: Oregon Parks and Recreation Commission

From: B.M. Bakke, Executive Director

Subject: Commission Agenda Item 14 – Bates Park Master Plan

The Native Fish Society (NFS) is a regional native fish conservation organization dedicated to the protection and restoration of wild native fish and their habitats. We have a particular interest in the opportunities for wild fish restoration on the old Bates Mill property now that Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD) has purchased this property.

OPRD has the opportunity to restore currently degraded habitat along the Middle Fork of the John Day River, which flows through the northern portion of the property. When the mill was built at this site, the river was channelized and ditched in order to facilitate the mill's operation. Restoring the natural function and meander of the stream and allowing the native riparian vegetation to recover will not only enhance the public benefits of the park but will also support the recovery of wild salmon, steelhead and trout in this area of the river. This work should be accomplished in coordination and cooperation with the upstream and downstream landowners, including the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Indian Reservation, who have already begun restoration activities on their lands.

Bridge Creek, which flows through the new park, is an important tributary of the Middle Fork of the John Day River. When the Bates Mill was built, a dam was constructed on lower Bridge Creek in order to create a log pond for the mill. The dam was built without any consideration for the needs of migrating fish and has blocked fish access to several miles of quality habitat for many decades. After many years of effort, the public ended up paying for a fish ladder at the dam, but serious consideration was never given to the benefits that the fish would receive if the dam were removed. NFS would like to see a commitment from OPRD to give dam removal the serious consideration it deserves by contracting for a study of the dam that would compare the benefits of dam removal to the continued operation of the fish ladder. If the study shows that fish and water quality would benefit by removing the dam, we would like to see that happen.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important matter. NFS looks forward to receiving a copy of the draft Master Plan for the park and to providing the commission with further comments when the plan comes before you for adoption at a future meeting.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bill Bakke", with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Bill Bakke  
Executive Director