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## Upper Columbia River Group

Box 413  
Spokane, Washington 99210

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June 21, 2011

Washington State Recreation & Conservation Funding Board  
c/o Washington Recreation & Conservation Office  
P.O. Box 40917 Olympia, WA 98504-0917

Re: Agency Termination of Languishing Project, Spokane Whitewater Park

Dear Members of the RCO Funding Board:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on a proposed project potentially impacting the Spokane River. The Upper Columbia River Group Sierra Club is one of the largest grassroots conservation organizations in the Inland Northwest, and a member of the Washington State Chapter – Sierra Club. Our members enjoy and seek to conserve the water and wildlife resources found throughout eastern Washington.

Sierra Club supports the decision by the RCO Funding Board to terminate the \$530,000 grant to study the Spokane River Whitewater Park. While we generally support non-motorized recreational use of the Spokane River, recent studies have revealed that the location of this proposed project would be in the middle of an ecologically sensitive area.

Avista Corporation recently completed an evaluation of wild redband trout spawning areas in the reach of the Spokane River between Monroe Dam and Nine Mile Dam. Avista's study shows that there is a highly productive spawning reach in the immediate vicinity of the proposed whitewater park. Redband trout populations in the Spokane River are declining, underscoring the need to protect habitat.

The proposed whitewater park would involve placing an underwater dam in the river, directly upstream of spawning areas. This dam (which would create a whitewater wave) would impact the hydraulics of the river, and potentially wash out the "north river bend" spawning area directly downstream of the Sandifur pedestrian bridge.

No agency has ever evaluated alternative sites for the proposed whitewater park in the Spokane River. A grant to study this particular site would not be a wise use of scarce public resources. Knowing that recreation and

conservation project funds are limited and important, we recommend that these public monies would be better spent on a project more likely to be built and provide a public benefit. Meanwhile we encourage study of alternative whitewater park sites that will not risk important fisheries habitat.

Your attention to this matter is appreciated. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can provide more information.

Sincerely,

*Shallan Knowles*

Shallan Knowles  
Conservation & Volunteer Coordinator  
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Cc:

Mayor Mary Verner, City of Spokane  
Joe Shogan, Spokane City Council, President  
Amber Waldref, Spokane City Council Member  
Bob Apple, Spokane City Council Member  
Jon Snyder, Spokane City Council Member  
Richard Rush, Spokane City Council Member  
Steve Corker, Spokane City Council Member  
Nancy McLaughlin, Spokane City Council Member  
Rachael Langen, RCO Deputy Director  
Rebecca Connolly, Board Liaison  
Dan Haws, RCO Project Manager  
Leroy Eadie, Director, City of Spokane Parks & Recreation  
Nancy Lopez, Department of Natural Resources