

For Immediate Release

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Chelan County PUD

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On-land Studies for Kayaking the Chelan River Gorge Begin

Two sections of the Chelan River were rated as possible Class 5 (most difficult) rapids for whitewater kayaking by American Whitewater Conservation Director John Gangemi following an on-land evaluation of the Gorge today (Wednesday). Also attending today's excursion were Chelan County PUD's relicensing team members Gregg Carrington and Michelle Smith, and PUD consultants and expert kayakers Bo Shelby of Corvallis, Oregon and Doug Whittaker of Nome, Alaska.

The evaluation included viewing the Chelan River Gorge with several flow regimes to determine the window necessary to make the river navigable for kayaking. Based on today's assessment, the required flows for kayaking the Gorge would range between 250 and 400 cfs (cubic feet per second.) At these relatively low flow levels, a kayaker would have adequate whitewater, yet if desired could portage around areas considered to be too difficult.

The Chelan River Gorge is approximately four miles long and runs from Lake Chelan to the Columbia River. The upper two sections, those just downstream of the Chelan dam, are considered by American Whitewater to be Class 2 whitewater (Class 1 rating being least difficult.) Sections three and four of the Gorge were rated today as being for expert boaters adept at running Class 5 waters.

As part of the Lake Chelan Hydroelectric Project relicensing, American Whitewater expressed interest in the Chelan River Gorge for its whitewater boating potential. A letter received from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission on May 27, advised Chelan County PUD and American Whitewater to gather sufficient on-land information before conducting any on-the-water boating tests. Today's assessment was the first phase of an on-land analysis to be conducted by the PUD. A full evaluation of the Chelan River Gorge will also include an analysis of the physical characteristics of the area and video documentation of flows at 250 and 500 cfs. Future on-the-water boating tests will be conducted after safety and liability issues have been adequately addressed and resolved.

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