



**Colville Confederated Tribes
Fish and Wildlife Department**

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September 4th, 2018

To: Roger Millar
Secretary of Transportation
Washington State Department of Transportation
P.O. Box 47300
Olympia, Washington 98504-7300

Subject: Highway 97 Underpass Support

I am writing this letter in support of the Safe Passage on Highway 97 Project. The Colville Tribe supports projects that are designed to enhance, restore and protect natural resources on and off the Reservation.

As active managers of our natural resources we value working with communities and organizations on landscape level projects that contribute to the recovery and protection of wildlife populations and other natural resources. The Safe Passage on Highway 97 Project is proposed on lands that not only fall on Tribal property but also include lands that are within our usual and accustomed areas.

The Washington Department of Transportation has identified the stretch of Highway 97 between Crumbacher and the Janis Bridge south of Tonasket as one of the highest car deer collision zones in the state. This 12 mile stretch of highway has over 350 vehicle-deer collisions each year. Our Tribal resource managers agree that this is a major issue not only for public safety but also for wildlife. The Tribe supports this project as it addresses the safety of motorists and protects the lives of deer and other wildlife species that utilize this area to meet their habitat needs.

As a partner of the Safe Passage on Highway 97 Project we support the construction, operation and monitoring of wildlife underpasses that will be completed as part of this proposal. Phase one of the proposal identifies an area on Highway 97 that is bordered by the Tribal Sherrard property on the east and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife on the west as the primary location for an underpass and its associated fencing and gates. The Colville Tribe approved a Land Management Plan for the Tribal Sherrard property that identified wildlife resource protection as a high priority. The construction and implementation of wildlife underpasses is in line with the goals and objectives of that plan. We understand that in Phase 2 and potentially in Phase 1 other areas may be used for addition underpasses, fencing and gates. The Tribe supports the proposed locations of these underpasses as well and expects to continue to coordinate with the Coalition on all location changes, updates, plans, and developments associated with this project.

We look forward to the benefits of participating in this Coalition such as promoting healthy working relationships with state and federal agencies, private landowners and nonprofit organizations, continuing our leadership in landscape level conservation efforts, and protecting cultural and subsistence species that are identified in our Tribe's Fish and Wildlife Management plan.

We recognize that the Safe Passage on Highway 97 Project will provide a safer environment for both people and wildlife and we are in support of this project. Given the hard economic times that we are all operating in we support the Safe Passage on Highway 97 Coalition to lobby, through legislation and nongovernmental organizations, to request funds to complete these projects. At this time no Tribal dollars are expected to be used or contributed to this project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "R. Cawston".

Rodney Cawston, Chairman Colville Business Council