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January 17, 2012

Palmer (Chip) Jenkins
Superintendent
North Cascades National Park Service Complex
810 State Route 20
Sedro-Woolley, WA 98284-1239

Re: Final Ross Lake National Recreation Area GMP/EIS

Dear Superintendent Jenkins:

The Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA) previously commented on the draft version of the Ross Lake National Recreation Area GMP/EIS in 2010. At that time we were very concerned that the preferred alternative, Alternative B, would severely limit seaplane access to Ross Lake and the recreation area.

We commend you and your staff for taking the time to meet with representatives of the seaplane pilot community and incorporate our ideas into your Final GMP/EIS. This collaboration resulted in allowing seaplanes to continue to use the lake under certain existing restrictions and to continue to use nine of the 19 camp sites within the recreation area. Further, under the final GMP/EIS the Park Service committed to working with the seaplane community to track and monitor seaplane usage of the lake, create noise abatement procedures and educate the pilot community about the lake and the specific procedures while maintaining a safe environment for all recreational users of the lake.

We are also pleased to note that you are not alone in your openness to aviation access. Your sister Federal agencies are also moving to recognize general aviation as a stakeholder. The US Forest Service's recent National Planning Rule process specifically recognized recreational aviation as a use in the National Forests. Aviation access to these areas provides an important opportunity for pilots, their families and friends to use and enjoy our nation's parks and public lands, and also allows mobility impaired recreationalists an opportunity to experience wilderness areas that are otherwise difficult for them to access.

On behalf of our members, AOPA welcomes these important changes to the preferred alternative, and consequently supports the preferred alternative. We appreciate the opportunity to work closely with the National Park Service and the Washington Seaplane Pilots Association to continue seaplane access to Ross Lake. If we can be of any further assistance please contact us at 301-695-2200.

Sincerely,


Gregory Pecoraro
Vice President
Airports and State Advocacy

cc:

Stephen Ratzlaff, President Washington Seaplane Pilots Association