

21 September 2023

Marla Koberstein
Department of Ecology
Water Quality Program
300 Desmond Dr. SE
Lacey, WA 98503

Sent via electronic submission

RE: L.I.G.H.T. Foundation Support for Proposed Designations under WA 173-201A

Dear Ms. Koberstein,

The L.I.G.H.T. Foundation (LF) is an independent, Indigenous-led, conservation 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization established on the Colville Indian Reservation in the traditional territory of the Nespelem Tribe. We support the restoration and cultivation of native plant species of Pacific Northwest Tribes and the culturally respectful conservation of habitats and ecosystems which are climate resilient and adaptive.

Waterways throughout present-day Washington State are often heralded for their natural beauty, biodiversity, and important ecological functions. Soap Lake, located in central Washington in the traditional homelands of the Moses-Columbia Tribe, is a highly mineralized lake formed following the last Ice Age and the retreat of the Cordilleran Ice Sheet. The Moses-Columbia Tribe, and other Indigenous Peoples of the region, knew this lake as a unique water source, composed of elements which contributed to physical healing. For thousands of years, the Moses-Columbia and other Tribal Nations visited Soap Lake to honor its waters and heal their people. These cultural practices continue today.

Since contact with Euro-Americans, Soap Lake has continued to be a destination location for healing and gathering. Into the present day, Soap Lake still attracts people from around the world due to its unique mineral and chemical composition, which recognizes its valuable contributions to health.

Unfortunately, the mineral content of Soap Lake is diminishing due to environmental challenges, including pollution, climate change, and loss of mineral content. LF encourages Ecology to help protect the remaining minerals and associated sediment and mud of the lake. LF supports the Soap Lake Conservancy and the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation in taking decisive action to safeguard Soap Lake.

LF is proud to support Soap Lake's Tier III(B) Outstanding Resource Water Designation. Soap Lake is exceptional for several reasons:

1. The unique habitat, which is regionally rare and an exceptional statewide ecological significance,

2. Value as a traditional cultural property of the Moses-Columbia Tribe, and other Indigenous Peoples of the region,
3. Value as a recreation destination, and
4. The distinct mineral content of Soap Lake, and one of the highest concentrations of mineral water in the world.

Soap Lake is a remarkable cultural and natural treasure, not just for Indigenous Peoples, but for all peoples in Washington State and beyond. Through collective action and public engagement, we can work together to protect and preserve its unique cultural and ecological values. The protection of Soap Lake contributes to the often-held Indigenous perspective and value that water is life and water is first.

Thank you for this opportunity to review and provide comment on this important proposed designation. LF appreciates your consideration and is committed to working with all government entities, partners, and allies to ensure that our traditional homelands remain resilient and strong in the face of climate change for generations to come.

Sincerely,



Joaquin J. Marchand, M.B.A.
Executive Director
[L.I.G.H.T. Foundation](#)