

Colter Courtney
Backcountry Travels LLC

Every industry has its hurdles to overcome. For the tourism industry in Stehekin, transportation is one of the primary obstacles to success. For many years, there were two modes of transportation on Lake Chelan: a seaplane business and the Lake Chelan Boat Company. These businesses provided thousands of visitors and residents access to a unique community, one of the last of its kind, and the North Cascades National Park. Unfortunately, 2016 saw the seaplane business close its doors on Lake Chelan after fifty plus years of service, leaving the Lake Chelan Boat Company as the single source of transportation to this remote destination. In an effort to fill the void left by the seaplane service leaving the area, Backcountry Travels LLC has developed a plan to offer an alternative boat service on Lake Chelan, increasing the economy in Stehekin and enabling more people to have access to the beauty of the Lake Chelan Recreation Area and the North Cascades National Park.

A lease agreement is in place for a 50-foot catamaran with a capacity for 32 passengers that is currently under construction. A catamaran is an efficient vessel for Lake Chelan. Powered by two Suzuki 140 four-stroke outboard motors, this boat will travel at a displacement speed of 20 knots. Displacement speed offers a much smoother ride than a planing hull and has the added benefits of requiring far less power, burning significantly less fuel, a smaller wake, and quieter travel over the water. The vessel is fully wheelchair accessible, with aisles, ramps, and a restroom built to accommodate persons with disabilities. Additionally, there is one wheelchair tie down on board. These particular features address an issue that has long since been a problem for Stehekin visitors, as other transportation services do not adequately provide for special needs. The restroom will also be equipped with a changing table. To best provide for passenger safety, the captain and crew will be CPR and 1st Aid certified. There will be an AED and a stocked first aid kit on board, along with an InReach device, marine radio, and life preservers for both adults and children above the passenger capacity of the vessel.

All reservations will be completed online. Customers will be able to visit the website, check seat availability, and book their passage without ever having to visit an office or stop on the dock to purchase tickets. Commuter ticket vouchers can also be purchased in bulk at a 10% discount. Pets will be allowed to travel on this vessel though pet owners must provide their own

kennel that can be carried on by the owner. Properly identified service animals will always be welcome and accommodated.

The proposed schedule is one round-trip per day all year long, with the exception of Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day and a few days in the spring and fall for scheduled maintenance. The vessel will be based in Stehekin, and will pick up and drop off passengers at the Stehekin landing, Fields Point and stops in between. There will be no conflict in dock times with the current boat service. Additionally, this service will also provide one day per week in the winter months where the boat will depart early in the morning and return late in the evening, allowing Stehekin residents time to run errands and schedule appointments without having to spend two nights in Chelan, as the current transportation option requires.

A second passenger service on Lake Chelan will be a boon to local economy. Most Stehekin residents are dependent on tourism for their livelihood, and this service will provide visitors more flexibility in their travel plans year-round. Under the present conditions, tourism is relegated to the summer months, as the current three day per week schedule provided by the Lake Chelan Boat Company in the winter months does not allow the weekend travel that most visitors require. A daily passenger service will provide customers for multiple privately owned rental cabins, as well as for other valley businesses and the National Park concession, The Lodge at Stehekin. This restaurant and hotel business will be able to stay open all year long, as it did when the concession was held by the owner of the Lake Chelan Boat Company. That business owner clearly saw a need for more winter passenger service to Stehekin when he was operating a tourism business in the valley, and transportation was available five days per week in the winter at that time. When the concession was resigned, the passenger services were reduced to the current schedule, despite requests from many Stehekin residents and the Stehekin Heritage Foundation to maintain the service.

There are numerous benefits of a secondary passenger service on Lake Chelan. Privately owned cabins with docks along the shores of the lake will be accessible year-round. Local residents will have the opportunity to secure employment working for Backcountry Travels LLC, adding jobs to the Stehekin economy. For some residents, this means being able to stay home for the winter instead of having to go out of the valley and find work elsewhere. Additionally, some Stehekin residents hold jobs in Chelan or Wenatchee. A daily boat based in Stehekin will allow these individuals more flexibility in their schedules, more efficiency in their travel time, and

hopefully more time with their families. Finally, growth in Lake Chelan's marine transportation industry will provide opportunity for new business ideas to be put into action with the best chance of success.

In pursuing a permit for ferry service, Backcountry Travels LLC simply seeks to offer a service that no other business is willing to provide. The goal is not to compete with the existing service but to enhance service as a whole. It is our belief that activity creates activity and with our daily winter schedule more folks will travel to Stehekin during the winter and that in the long run will benefit both transportation options. The Lake Chelan Recreation Area and the North Cascades National Park were created to share the profound majesty of the Stehekin valley and the surrounding mountains, and there is abundant beauty and recreation all year long that deserve to be seen and experienced. Visitors to the area deserve a choice in their transportation. Property owners along the length of Lake Chelan deserve access to their cabins. Residents of the Stehekin valley deserve reliable daily transportation on the lake, and the opportunity to pursue business and provide for their families. Backcountry Travels LLC looks forward to meeting these needs and filling a gap in the current transportation options on Lake Chelan.