



Road Management ⁷⁰

Road Maintenance During 2003 the Forest conducted studies to determine if the current road maintenance operations would be competitive with private industry. The results of these out-sourcing studies recommended that the Forest solicit bids from private industry to determine if road maintenance activities could be out-sourced at a savings to the government. In January 2004, the results of bid evaluations determined that the work would remain in-house and the Forest would retain its in-house maintenance crews and equipment.

Budgets are not providing the necessary funds to meet our road maintenance needs.

Currently, budget allocations are not providing the necessary funding levels to meet all our Forest maintenance needs. Our present road system has 834 miles of road that are subject to the Highway Safety Act (Maintenance Level 3-5). The main focus of road maintenance is the health and safety of the public and Forest Service employees who use the roads. The maintenance needs for level 3-5 roads is greater than our budget allows and leaves few dollars to accomplish maintenance on 1,528 miles of lower standard level 2 roads.

The Forest has been able to benefit from other funding, which has allowed us to accomplish more road maintenance and road improvements beyond the limits of our normal maintenance budget. Title II funds on projects submitted through the Resource Advisory Committees have supported heavy maintenance, road stabilization, and culvert and drainage improvements on lower standard roads that would be beyond the normal road maintenance priorities. The Forest has applied for Capital Improvement Funds for major reconstruction on main forest routes, and for improvements to road stream crossing to improve passage for aquatic species.

Road Closures include permanent and seasonal closures and decommissioning. Permanent closures are year-around closures created by berms, rock barricades, or by allowing vegetative growth to obscure the road.

Some roads are closed seasonally by gates or other barriers that allow us to open the road during non-critical periods. This seasonal closure may be to protect elk calving grounds, winter range for deer and elk, other wildlife resources. Roads are also closed for administrative reasons, such as protection of weak subgrades, or providing visitors with non-motorized experiences.

Decommissioning involves permanent removal of the road from the system by removing drainage structures to create more natural drainage patterns, decompacting some roadbeds to restore their capacity to absorb rainfall, blocking the entrance to prevent vehicles from reopening the road, and revegetating the roadbed to prevent runoff and to restore productivity. We account for how much overall decommissioning is done on the Forest, and also how much decommissioning and new construction have been done in each of the designated Key Watersheds on the Forest, to ensure there is no increase in road miles in any Key Watershed.



Road Closure Results:

Biological Winter Range (BWR) Road closures are one means of reducing wildlife disturbance in deer and elk winter range. The Forest Plan established a goal of reducing open road density to 1.7 miles of open road per square mile within the biological winter range. The Gifford Pinchot has been able to maintain an average road density below the Forest Plan target. The current average road density in BWR Forestwide is only 1.67 miles of open road per square mile. Individual district values for open roads in BWR in miles per square mile are: 1.0 for Mt St. Helens, 1.51 for Mt. Adams, and 2.44 for Cowlitz Valley.

The Forest has surpassed the Forest Plan goal for road density in Biological Deer and Elk winter range.

Overall Forest: The projected road closure target for the entire Gifford Pinchot National Forest, as stated in the Forest Plan, is 1,230 miles of road in seasonal or permanent closure, Forest-wide. There are currently 1,292 miles prescribed for closure and an estimated 1,002 miles of road closed by effective year-round closures, or seasonally for BWR or other resource needs. This puts the Forest at 81 percent of the projected goal. In addition, 342 miles of road have been decommissioned since 1994, which includes 143 miles in Key Watersheds.

Table 13. - Roads in Key Watersheds

KEY WATERSHED	1994 Road Miles	Miles Decommissioned in FY 2003	Miles Decommissioned since 1994	Miles Constr. Since 1994	2003 Road Miles	Net Change Road Miles
Clear Fork Cowlitz	110	0	0	0	110	0
E.Fork Lewis	79	0	3	0	76	-3
Lewis River	737	0	40	0	697	-40
Little White Salmon	133	0	9	1	125	-8
N. Fork Cispus	102	0	4	0	98	-4
Packwood Lake	23	0	0	0	23	0
Siouxon Creek	69	0	0	0	69	0
Upper Cispus	70	0	8	0	62	-8
White Salmon	129	2	19	1	111	-18
Wind River	433	0	60	0	373	-60
Totals	1,885	2	143	2	1,744	-141

Table 13 compares current road mileage in the 10 key watersheds on the Forest with mileage at the time the Northwest Forest Plan was implemented in 1994. The Forest is required to maintain or decrease the road mileage in each Key Watershed. As can be seen from Table 13 this objective has been met; there are now 7.3 percent fewer miles of roads in key watersheds on the Forest than there were in 1994, and there has been no increase in road mileage in any key watershed.

Table 14 lists road projects completed (28.7 miles) from January – December 2003.



Table 14. – 2003 Road Construction Projects

Watershed	Road Number	Miles	Activities
Clear Fork Cowlitz	4500000	0.1	Slide Removal
Little White Salmon	1800000	3.6	Culvert upgrades (3), replacements (18) and pit run placement for erosion control
Little White Salmon	1831000	1.4	Culvert upgrade, replacements (7) and installation (3)
Little White Salmon	1831020	0.1	Culvert upgrade and pit run placement for erosion control
Little White Salmon	1831031	0.2	Culvert Replacement
Lower Cispus River	2500053	0.1	Decommission
Lower Cispus River	2500057	0.1	Decommission
Lower Cispus River	7600652	0.1	Decommission
Merwin Reservoir	3700000	3.7	Culvert Replacement (6), rip rap culvert outlet for erosion control (4)
Merwin Reservoir	3800000	1.6	Culvert Replacement (4) and stabilize damage
Merwin Reservoir	5400000	0.2	Culvert Replacement (2)
Merwin Reservoir	5400000	0.5	Slide Removal
Muddy River	2500000	0.1	Culvert repair
Muddy River	9900000	0.1	Slide Removal
Upper Cispus River	2801000	0.3	Slide Removal
Upper Cowlitz River	2130000	0.1	Slide Removal
Upper Cowlitz River	5200000	0.2	Slide Removal
Upper Lewis River	3000000	2.6	Culvert Replacement (4)
Upper Lewis River	8800000	1.0	Culvert Replacement (2)
Upper Lewis River	8800000	0.5	Flood Repair (bypass road)
Upper Lewis River	9000000	0.1	Culvert Repair
White Salmon River	2380000	1.2	Decommission
White Salmon River	2380081	1.9	Waterbar installation
White Salmon River	8031028	0.6	Decommission
White Salmon River	8031070	0.1	Culvert Installation
White Salmon River	8031070	0.2	Decommission
White Salmon River	8031073	0.3	Decommission
White Salmon River	8031734	0.4	Decommission
White Salmon River	8800150	2.8	Waterbar installation and culvert removal
White Salmon River	8810031	0.8	Waterbar installation (15)
White Salmon River	8810721	0.2	Decommission
Wind River	6000000	0.1	Culvert Upgrade
Wind River	6500000	0.1	Culvert Upgrade
Wind River	6800000	1.2	Culvert Upgrades (5)
Wind River	6801000	2.0	Culvert Upgrade (3) and slide repair
Wind River	6801000	0.1	Stabilize flood damage



Community Effects – Payments to Counties 

Introduction: By an act of Congress in 1908, 25 percent of Forest revenues were paid to counties in proportion to the amount of national forest system land in each county. The act stipulated that the money generated be spent on public schools and roads. While this formula worked well for many years, with the dramatic decline in timber harvest over the past decade, an interest arose in decoupling support to rural communities from timber harvest.

The “Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000”, provides an alternative system by which counties can choose to receive payments from the federal government for the support of roads and schools. This legislation stabilizes payment levels to their historic high and provides that 15 – 20 percent of the funds may be used for projects on the Forest with advice from local citizens.

The new formula is based on averaging a state’s three highest payments between 1986 through 1999 to arrive at a compensation allotment or “full payment amount.” Communities have the choice to fund restoration projects on federal lands or on county endeavors such as search and rescue, community service work camps or fire prevention. Forest projects must be approved by one of two 15-member Resource Advisory Committees (RAC) comprised of local citizens. The new legislation is slated to guide payment activities through fiscal 2006. Details of the legislation are on the Internet at <http://www.fs.fed.us/payments/index.html>.

Results: Over \$16 million was returned to the six counties with lands in the Forest boundary. Projects on the Forest totaling nearly \$1.3 million were recommended for funding by the RACs and approved by the Forest Supervisor. The current distribution among counties within the Forest boundary is displayed in, Table 15.

Over \$16 million was returned to the 6 counties within the Forest boundary.

Table 15. - Community Effects—Payments to Counties

County	Percent Total Distribution	2003 Distribution
Clark	0.1%	15,087
Cowlitz	2.6%	424,503
Klickitat	1.1%	171,434
Lewis	27.3%	4,400,137
Skamania	67.3%	10,850,871
Yakima	1.6%	258,392
Total	100%	16,118,422

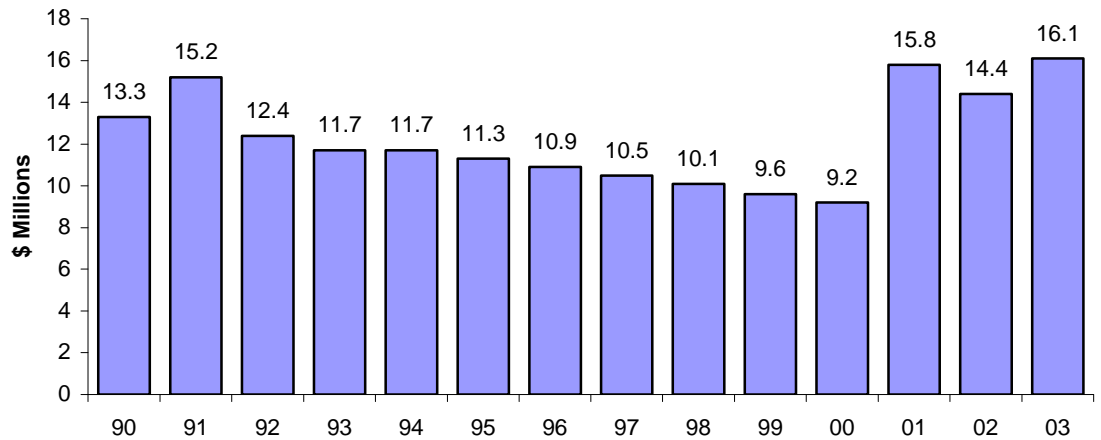


Figure 35. – Payments to Counties

An important Forest Service goal in recent years has focused on helping rural communities adjust to changing federal land management practices and policies. The Forest Service has developed a program designed to provide both financial and technical assistance to natural resource-based communities and rural development organizations striving to diversify and revitalize local economies, and address wildfire hazards. In 2003 the program, called Rural Community Assistance, invested \$224 thousand in the infrastructure of communities surrounding the Forest. Grants to counties in the past eight years are tabulated in Table 16.

Table 16. - Rural Community Assistance Grants

County	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Cowlitz	400,200	90,538	2,500	0	86,750	78,000	57,000	70,000
Klickitat	302,832	227,600	178,700	129,000	117,500	50,000	205,000	0
Lewis	417,754	223,691	32,000	167,75	76,600	64,800	218,000	50,000
Wahkiakum	48,200	28,000	105,000	62,785	98,000	0	0	50,000
Clark	23,426	0	0	0	0	20,000	22,000	0
Skamania	118,560	192,050	164,000	273,280	111,800	332,600	128,800	34,000
Yakima	0	0	0	0	0	0	65,000	20,000
Pierce	7,314	15,000	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	\$1,318,286	\$776,879	\$482,200	\$632,840	\$490,050	\$545,400	\$695,800	\$224,000



Mining Operating Plans ⁹¹

Introduction: The Forest Service is charged with making minerals available to the economy, while minimizing the adverse impacts of mining activities on other resources. Mining is unlike other activities on federal lands, in that the General Mining Law of 1872 grants the federal land management agencies far less authority over mining activities than over timber harvest, recreation, grazing and other activities. The Forest Service minerals regulations, 36 CFR 228, provide rules to ensure that mining operations be conducted to minimize environmental impacts. These regulations require that a Notice of Intent (NOI) be submitted to the Forest Service District Ranger on the district where the mining is proposed. The operator is required to submit a Plan of Operations (POO) if the District Ranger determines that such operations will likely cause significant disturbance of surface resources. Recreational suction dredgers are required to get hydraulic permits from the state for working in streams and should submit a NOI or POO to the Forest Service prior to working on the district.



The Forest issued 107 permits for mining activities in 2003.

Photo Jim Chamberlin

Figure 36. – A placer gold mine.

Results: The Forest issued 107 minerals permits, administered 25 Notice of Intents and four Plans of Operations for mining activities. Cowlitz Valley issued 40 permits and administered 22 NOI's, Mt. Saint Helens issued 42 permits,



administered three NOI's and 2 POO's and Mt. Adams issued 28 permits and had 2 POO's.

Table 17. – Permit Administered

	2000	2001	2002	2003
Mineral Permits	137	127	125	107
NOIs	24	23	23	25
Plans of Operation	2	3	2	4

Most of the mineral permits involved salable (common variety) mineral resources. The permits issued were for a total of 192 cubic yards for a cost of \$1,846. These permits were issued for either building material (flat, platy flagstone-type rock), construction material (used for fill, road rock or similar use) or landscaping material (decorative uses). The Forest provided about 150 cubic yards of crushed aggregate to a local fire district for construction of a new staging area for their fire truck.

It appears the effects of suction dredging to the aquatic ecosystem are negligible.



Photo Jim Chamberlin

Figure 37. - A mining claim bunkhouse built in the 1930's

On-Forest use of rock for numerous construction projects amounted to about 2,500 cubic yards. About 1,000 cubic yards was used for surface rock repair work. The rest was used as pit-run material for various embankment repairs and culvert replacements.

Suction Dredging - The required hydraulic permits limit mining activity and its timing, based on guidelines set up in a state publication, *Gold and Fish*. This publication contains rules and regulations for mineral prospecting and placer mining in Washington State (WDFW Publication GF-1-99). This

year the Forest had 21 NOIs for suction dredging on the Forest; two on Copper Creek, which is a tributary of the East Fork Lewis, and the rest were located on Yellowjacket/McCoy creeks and various tributaries of this system. There is some concern that *Gold and Fish* allows suction dredging in the lower Yellowjacket and McCoy Creeks that may adversely impact anadromous fish spawning. New regulations that will change the timing in *Gold and Fish* are in progress. New dates have been established but a new version of *Gold and Fish* has not yet been published.



Numerous campsites and posting of mining claims were noted along McCoy Creek, but no dredgers were active when visited by Forest Service personnel. It appears most of the activity probably takes place on weekends. Personnel need to be on-site when activity is occurring to further assess the effects of mining activity. It appears that effects of suction dredging would be negligible to the aquatic system.

Evaluation: Standards and guidelines were met.

Recommended Action: Continue having the state notify the Forest of applicants for hydraulic permits on the Forest. The dredgers should also be providing Notices of Intent to each district where they plan on working.

Working closer with miners to ensure they provide better information on their Plan of Operations may reduce the time needed to review and provide a decision.

Recreational suction dredging needs to be monitored on the weekends when most of the activity occurs.