



File Code: 1950

Date: April 1, 2008

Re: 2008 Forest and County Road Maintenance and Repair Projects
Mountain Loop Highway, S. F. Stillaguamish Road Systems
and North Fork Sauk Road System of the Darrington District

Dear Forest User:

The Forest Service is analyzing several road maintenance projects on the Darrington Ranger District, including 4 projects funded by Emergency Relief for Federally Owned (ERFO) transportation systems, 5 projects proposed by Snohomish County Public Works and 2 projects funded by Legacy Funding from Congressional allocations to the Forest Service. Construction for most road repairs would be scheduled to occur during the summer and fall of 2008 with some projects to be completed in 2009. The Black Creek Bridge repair on Road 4021 is an example of a project scheduled for design in 2008 with construction in 2009. The Forest Service is scoping for issues that the environmental analysis should address. Please provide comments on issues and scope of analysis by May 10, 2008 for the projects below:

ERFO projects:

1. Forest Service Road 4021 – Bear Lake Road (Mile Post 1.7), T30N, R08E, Section 25, SE1/4; and Black Creek Bridge (Milepost 1.5), T30N, R08E, Sec. 36, NE1/4; east of Granite Falls, WA.
2. Forest Service Road 4060 – Coal Lake Road (Mile Post 1.85) Culvert Cleanout, T30N, R10E, Sec. 15, NW1/4, east of Granite Falls, WA.
3. Bedal Creek Bridge Footing Repair (Mile Post 35.9), Mountain Loop Highway, T30N, R11E, Sec. 21, NE1/4, southeast of Darrington, WA.
4. Forest Service Road 4030 - Mallardy Creek (Mile Post 2.1) Replace lost embankment, T30N, R09E, Sec.27 SE1/4, east of Granite Falls, WA.

Snohomish County projects:

5. Jarsk Creek Culvert Replacement, Mountain Loop Highway (Mile Post 25.1), 14 miles east of Verlot Ranger Station, WA, T30N, R10E, Sec. 21, SE1/4.
6. Big 4 Culvert Replacement, Mountain Loop Highway (Mile Post 25.4), east of Verlot, WA, T30N, R10E, Sec. 22, SW1/4.
7. Phase II of the Marten Creek Erosion Control, Mountain Loop Highway (Mile Post 20.7), east of Verlot, WA, T30N, R09E, Sec. 23, SE1/4.
8. Marten Creek Bridge Replacement, Mountain Loop Highway (Mile Post 20.8), east of Verlot, WA, T30N, R09E, Sec.23, SE1/4.
9. North Sauk River Road Residential Access, 2 miles southeast of Darrington, WA, in portions of Sections 30 and 31, T.32N, R.10E.

LEGACY Funding – Forest Service

10. Mountain Loop Highway - Road 20: Replace numerous culverts at various locations along 14.0 miles of road (from White Chuck road intersection to Barlow Pass), which are beyond their lifespan and/or are undersized. \$50,000 work planned in the Upper Sauk – a priority watershed.



11. Sloan Creek Road 49: Replace numerous culverts at various locations along 9.0 miles of road (MP 0.0 to MP 9.0), which are beyond their lifespan and / or are undersized. \$25,000 work planned in the Upper Sauk – a priority watershed.

Below is listed the purpose and need for each of the proposed actions, with a brief project description. Maps (Figure 1 and Figure 2) with the location of the proposed actions are attached.

1. ERFO - Road 4021– Bear Lake Road

Purpose and Need: There is a need to restore administrative and recreational access to hiking trails and dispersed recreational sites in the S.F. of the Stillaguamish River drainage. High flood waters scoured the existing log footing of the bridge at Mile Post 1.5, causing the bridge to settle approximately 24 inches. The settling caused two separate holes to develop in the bridge surfacing and washed away surface material from the bridge logs.

Proposed Action: The existing log bridge would be removed and disposed of and a 60 foot single lane bridge installed.

2. ERFO - Road 4060 – Coal Lake Road Culvert Cleanout and Road Repair

Purpose and Need: There is a need to restore administrative and recreational access to hiking trails, dispersed camping and recreational sites in the S.F. of the Stillaguamish River drainage. On the Coal Lake Road, material from winter storms plugged an existing 60 inch culvert; high water overtopped the road and washed out road material and fill slope below the road.

Proposed Action: The project proposes to unplug the 60 inch culvert, replace embankment and road surfacing. The inlet basin would be cleaned so the creek upstream would be able to flow into the existing culvert. The trash rack would be repositioned over the inlet. Material cleaned from the inlet would be used to repair the road embankment if suitable.

3. ERFO - Mountain Loop – Bedal Footing Repair

Purpose and Need: There is a need for safe use of both lanes of the Bedal Bridge on the Mountain Loop Highway.

Proposed Action: The project proposes to repair the Bedal Creek Bridge footing by excavating under the scoured footing to square up a hole for concrete to be poured, approximately 4 cubic yards concrete. Large boulders will be placed around the footing repair to protect the site.

4. ERFO - Road 4030 – Mallardy Creek Road Repair

Purpose and Need: There is a need to restore administrative and recreational access to hiking trails, dispersed camping and recreational sites in the S.F. of the Stillaguamish River drainage. Winter storm damage in 2006/2007 resulted in lost of access on Road 4030, the Mallardy Creek Road due to road embankment sloughing.

Proposed Action: The project proposes to replace lost embankment at MP 2.1 with a reconstructed fill slope. The existing culvert and inlet basin would be unplugged and cleaned. The project would reconstruct 100 feet of ditchline and replace lost aggregate surfacing.

5. Mountain Loop - Big 4 Culvert Replacement – Snohomish County Public Works, FHWA, FWS

Purpose and Need: There is a need to provide fish passage in streams crossed by the Mt. Loop Highway.

Proposed Action: The project proposes to replace the existing twin 36” diameter culverts with a 16-foot bottomless box culvert, to simulate a natural stream channel under highway, increasing fish passage potential and spawning habitat in Big 4 Creek. Partners include Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). NEPA Document: Categorical Exclusion. Decision Date: July, 2008.

6. Mountain Loop - Jarsk Culvert Replacement – USFS, Snohomish County Public Works

Purpose and Need: There is a need to provide fish passage in streams crossed by the Mt. Loop Highway.

Proposed Action: The project proposes to replace the existing single 36” diameter culvert (that blocks fish migration) with an open-bottom arch culvert or bottomless box culvert to restore passage in Jarsk Creek to bull trout and resident cutthroat (1.36 miles), steelhead (1.08 miles), and coho (0.78 mile). NEPA Document: Categorical Exclusion. Decision Date: December, 2008

7. Mountain Loop – Marten Creek Erosion Repair Phase II – Snohomish County Public Works

Purpose and Need: There is a need to retain access on the Mt. Loop Highway to the town of Silverton, as well as retain administrative and recreational access in the upper S.F. Stillaguamish River drainage provided by the Mountain Loop Highway.

Proposed Action: The project proposes to issue a special use permit to Snohomish County. The County is requesting the permit for erosion control along a segment of the South Fork Stillaguamish River near Marten Creek. The county proposes to extend a newly-constructed rock embankment along the South Fork Stillaguamish River to protect the highway and existing Marten Creek Bridge (to be replaced) from erosion that started in November, 2007. The District Ranger approved an emergency action to reinforce 200 feet of eroding river bank in January, 2008, as the highway was in danger of washing out in this location at approximately Mile Post 20.7. The Phase II bank repair is considered an interim measure to protect the highway while alternatives for either building a permanent revetment or relocating the highway are developed through a subsequent environmental assessment process.

NEPA Document: Decision Memo. Decision Date: June, 2008.

8. Mountain Loop – Marten Creek Bridge Replacement – Snohomish County Public Works, FHWA

Purpose and Need: There is a need for continued safe use of the Mt. Loop Highway for administrative and recreational access in the upper S.F. Stillaguamish River drainage.

Proposed Action: This project proposes to replace the existing 1949 bridge at Mile Post 20.8, which was constructed with a treated timber superstructure and footings, and a concrete deck and railings. The proposed new bridge would be single-span, constructed with precast concrete beams and reinforced concrete footings. Note: the proposal at this time is to replace the bridge in its current location. However, given the recent erosion problems occurring in close proximity to the bridge (see above), alternatives may be developed to locate the new bridge (and section of highway) away from the main river. This would require an environmental assessment. NEPA Document: Categorical Exclusion by Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). Decision Date: Fall, 2008.

9. North Sauk River Road Residential Access– Snohomish County Public Works

Purpose and Need: There is a need to provide access to the County’s North Sauk River Road for residential vehicle access that has been cut off since the flood of October, 2003.

Proposed Action: The project proposes to issue a special use permit to Snohomish County to reconstruct an existing 0.24 mile road grade on national forest land to reconnect the County’s North Sauk River Road from the south. This route would utilize repaired sections of USFS Road 22 from the White Chuck Bridge to the county road at approximately Mile Post 7.0, with the County maintaining Road 22 for passenger car use through a road maintenance agreement with the Forest Service. NEPA Document: Decision Memo. Decision Date: July 2008

10. LEGACY Funding – Forest Service - Mountain Loop Highway – Culvert Upgrades on Road 20

Purpose and Need: There is a need to provide for road drainage that meets current standards and provide for the continued safe administrative and recreational use of the Mt. Loop Highway.

Proposed Action: Replace numerous deteriorating culverts at various locations along 14.0 miles of road from the intersection of the Mountain Loop with the White Chuck Road (Road 23) to Barlow Pass. Many of these culverts are beyond their lifespan and/or are undersized. \$50,000 work planned in the Upper Sauk – a priority watershed.

11. LEGACY Funding – Forest Service – North Fork Sauk – Culvert Upgrades on Road 49

Purpose and Need: There is a need to provide for road drainage that meets current standards and provide continued safe administrative and recreational access on the N.F. Sauk Road 49 that currently is the only portal for vehicle access to Glacier Peak Wilderness trailheads.

Proposed Action: Replace numerous culverts at various locations along 9.0 miles of Road 49 (MP 0.0 to MP 9.0), which are beyond their lifespan and /or are undersized. \$25,000 work planned in the Upper Sauk—a priority watershed.

Compliance with Laws and Regulations

Consideration for implementation of these projects would also require that the approved action be in compliance with laws and other regulatory agency requirements, such as the Endangered Species Act, National Historic Preservation Act, etc. Any approved projects must also be consistent with the *Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan* (1990), as amended by the *1994 Record of Decision (ROD) for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl*, and *Standards and Guidelines for Management of Habitat for Late-Successional and Old-Growth Forest Related Species Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl* (1994 ROD or Northwest Forest Plan); and *2004 Aquatic Conservation Strategy (ACS) Record of Decision* (2004 ACS ROD).

The 11 proposed actions fall within categories that exclude them from documentation in an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement. There are no identified extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed actions, and they are within categories listed in FSH 1909.15, Section 31.12, No. 4, *Repair and maintenance of roads* (culvert replacement, bridge replacement and culvert cleanout); and Section 31.2, No. 3, *Approval, modification or continuation or minor special uses of National Forest System lands that require less than five contiguous acres of land*. The decisions for the road repair and maintenance (Roads 4021, 4060, the footing repair at Bedal Creek, the culvert replacement on the Mountain Loop Scenic By-way and culvert replacements on Road 49) would be documented in categorical exclusion letters, signed by the District Ranger as the Responsible Official. The decision for Phase II of the Marten Creek Erosion Control and the North Sauk River Road Residential Access would be documented in Decision Memos, signed by the Forest Supervisor as the Responsible Official. See above. These decisions are expected by July, 2008.

If you have comments on these proposed actions, please submit them to Phyllis Reed by May 10, 2008 at the above address, phone 360-436-1155, email: preed@fs.fed.us. We appreciate your continued interest in the management of the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest.

Sincerely,

/S/ Peter Forbes
PETER FORBES
District Ranger

Comments received in response to this invitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be part of the Project Record and available for public review.