

**Decision Notice
and Finding of No Significant Impact**

Santiam Pass Summer Motorized Recreation Project

Non-Significant Forest Plan Amendment #49

USDA Forest Service

McKenzie River Ranger District

Willamette National Forest

Lane and Linn Counties, Oregon

Legal Location: T.13S, R.7E, T.13S, R.7 1/2E, T.14S, R.7E, and T.14S, R.7 1/2E; Willamette
Meridian

October 2008

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Santiam Pass Area is a popular summer destination, offering many recreational opportunities. Some common summer activities occurring in the area include: hiking, hunting, camping, mountain biking, horse back riding, and off-highway vehicle (OHV) travel. In addition, many highway legal vehicles drive the area for pleasure; viewing places like the Sand Mountain Lookout and the Santiam Wagon Road.

According to the Willamette National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan the project area is “open to off-road vehicle use off designated roads and trails.” In the late 1960’s there was a large fire in the area. Afterwards, salvage logging and firewood cutting took place within the Santiam Pass area. These activities led to the establishment of many user created trails within the project area. OHV use has become very common in the area over the last decade resulting in the establishment of new user created trails and the expansion of existing ones. More than 10 miles of motorized user-created tracks and cross-country travel has altered or damaged resources within the Santiam Pass Summer Motorized Recreation Project area over the years. Examples of motorized related damage includes degradation of the Santiam Wagon Road, intrusion on the Pacific Crest Trail, entry into wilderness, and adverse impacts to other sensitive biological and geological resources.

The past decade has witnessed a substantial increase in OHV use at the national, regional, and local levels. 2003 Forest Service Chief Dale Bosworth, called unmanaged recreation, including OHV use, one of the top four threats to forest health in the nation (EA page 3). Resource damage caused by unmanaged motorized use in the project area combined with the increasing popularity of OHV use has prompted this decision. This decision aims to manage summer motorized recreation to reduce resource damage, while maintaining a diversity of recreational opportunities unique to the area.

The Santiam Pass Summer Motorized Recreation Project is located on the McKenzie River Ranger District of the Willamette National Forest. The Project area is bounded by forest road 2676 on the west, U.S. Highway 20 on the north, the Willamette National Forest boundary on the east, and the Mt. Washington Wilderness Area boundary on the south. Approximately 10,500 acres of the project area (13,850 acres) is identified in the 10b Management Area, which as stated in Willamette National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, is to provide for Semiprimitive Motorized recreation opportunities.

The project area has 68 miles of existing Forest roads with many dispersed camping sites located along road 2890 and the Santiam Wagon Road (SWR). The SWR runs through the project area from east to west and is represented as roads 2676-866, 2690-810, and 2690-811. Approximately 3.4 miles of the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail (PCT) is situated along the east side of the project area. Other recreation sites in the project area include the Hoodoo Ski Area, Big Lake Campground, Big Lake West Campground, Big Lake Youth Camp and many dispersed camping areas.

This decision notice (DN) documents the purpose and need, public participation, my decision, rational for my decision, implementation, other alternatives considered and my finding regarding whether

or not to prepare an environmental impact statement in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508). The end of the document addresses who has standing to appeal and lists how, where and when appeals can be placed.

II. PURPOSE and NEED

The purpose of this project is to develop and implement formal management of motorized use in the project area. Actions that respond to this need must include protection of heritage resources and other natural resources in the area. The following specific needs have been identified for this project:

Actions Are Needed To:
Designate a system of roads and trails for motorized recreation vehicle use within the project area, as directed by the Willamette Forest Plan and existing policies.
Rehabilitate existing motorized recreation vehicle-impacts to the Santiam Wagon Road, and to protect this important heritage resource from future impacts.
Provide recreation opportunities in the project area that offers a quality family-oriented experience.

III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The first proposal for the project began when District Rangers for the McKenzie River Ranger District and the Sisters Ranger District co-signed a Project Initiation Letter (PIL) on the Santiam Pass Dispersed Recreation project in March 2002. It was listed in the November 2002 Willamette Forest Focus, and the quarterly Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA) for the Willamette National Forest. In 2004, the decision was made to prepare a separate analysis for each Ranger District, and a second PIL was signed by the McKenzie River Ranger District's Ranger in June 2004.

A public scoping letter was mailed to a list of interested individuals (list located in Chapter 4 of the EA) on February 3, 2005. Two public meetings were held in 2005. Public response to this mailing resulted in over 200 comments in letters and emails. The interdisciplinary team (IDT) developed the significant issues addressed from public and other agency comments.

On December 17, 2007, the Santiam Pass Summer Motorized Recreation Project was made available to the public and other agencies for a 30-day public review and comment period in accordance with 36 CFR 215. There were 95 individual comment letters/phone calls received. All comments were reviewed and discussed by appropriate resource specialists and officials. A limited summary of these comments and the Forest Service responses to some of those comments are listed below starting on page 20. Not all comments received Forest Service responses, many issues were brought up by multiple individuals or were deemed outside of the scope of this project.

IV. DECISION

After review of public comments, consultation with District and Forest specialists, and a thorough review of the analysis, I have decided to implement Alternative 3 modified. Alternative 3 modified most closely resembles Alternative 3, but includes elements from each of the action alternatives. Activities to be implemented north of the SWR and west of road 2690 will be mostly the same as Alternative 3 listed in the EA. Activities south of the SWR and east of road 2690 will be changed as discussed below.

Santiam Wagon Road

- Approximately 3.8 miles of the SWR will be designated as motorized mixed use. This will be from the Deschutes National Forest (NF) boundary going west to junction 860. Although speed will be limited, this will allow for users to still access many of the roads, trails and dispersed campsites.
- Approximately 1.4 miles of the SWR will be designated for highway legal vehicles only. This will be from the 860 junction traveling west to the 890 junction. This will give an opportunity for highway legal vehicles to be able to make a loop of road 890 and also gives non-motorized users an opportunity to park and visit the Sand Mountain SIA area.
- OHV crossings will be reduced from 8 to 3, which will help decrease the amount of impacts on the SWR from motorized users.
- A 25 mph maximum speed limit will be posted for the entire SWR. Slower traffic will help reduce the potential for resource damage of the SWR. Some areas, such as congested areas, will have slower speed limits posted for safety reasons.
- Signs will be installed with a wagon road logo to inform users that they are on the historic wagon road, and the informational kiosks in the staging areas will include graphic displays pertaining to the historic wagon road

Through the mitigation measures, the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and our heritage resource specialist concur that the SWR can be adequately protected.

Dispersed Camping, campgrounds, and road intersections

Alternative 3 modified does include a Regulated Camping Zone surrounding Ray Benson Sno Park. This area extends south to the end of the Big Lake Road 2690, along the SWR, and encompassing the Big Lake Campground Complex. The Regulated Camping Zone will restrict dispersed camping to designated sites.

- There will be a maximum of 20 dispersed camping sites within the Regulated Camping Zone along the SWR. These sites will be marked as designated dispersed campsites and no dispersed camping will be allowed outside of these marked sites within the Regulated Camping Zone. I feel this is a sufficient number of dispersed campsites to allow for multiple recreational opportunities.

- Designated improved campsites within Ray Benson will be provided according to future demand.
- A 10-15 mph speed limit will be posted around dispersed camp sites, camp grounds, staging areas and some road intersections. The posted speed limits will help further protect the SWR, provide for dust and noise abatement, and reduce potential safety hazards with all recreation users.
- Block and rehabilitate 13 existing dispersed campsites that are not incorporated into this action (29.2 acres restored).
- All dispersed campsites will be located outside of the riparian reserves adjacent to Big Lake.
- No designated dispersed campsites will be located within 100 feet of the Pacific Crest Trail
- No constructed improvements such as tables, garbage cans, or toilet facilities will be provided in dispersed campsites. Some designated dispersed campsites may have constructed fire rings installed to reduce potential fire hazards.
- During the selection of campsites, any trees identified under current hazard tree criteria will be felled
- When camping outside of the Regulated Camping Zone all motor vehicles must remain within 100 feet of an open Forest system road.

Deschutes National Forest Boundary

The portion of the decision regarding the connecting roads to the Deschutes NF may be changed upon completion of the Travel Management Planning decisions on the Deschutes NF (Note: in the EA the Travel Management Planning Process was referred to as “road management planning”). The decisions by the Deschutes NF will directly influence what the appropriate connections and use of road 920, 910 and/or trail 3558 will be.

- Road 920, extending to trail 3558 leading east out of Ray Benson, will be closed to all motorized use pending the decisions by the Deschutes NF on their Travel Management Planning process. I did not want users to be forced to turn around at our forest boarder or be tempted to make an illegal decision and continue onto the Deschutes NF. If the Deschutes NF decides to allow motorized use on their portion of this trail, I will produce another decision that will connect road 920 to trail 3558 making the non-motorized trail (TR3558) into a motorized class I, II and III trail. This decision will require a non-significant forest plan amendment. This secondary route going east into the Deschutes NF will create another access route to the Deschutes NF other than the SWR.
- Road 910 extending east to the Deschutes NF boundary will be currently closed to motorized mixed use until the Deschutes NF completes their Travel Management Planning processes. Road 910 will be closed because the Deschutes NF road connecting to road 910 is currently closed (it is a Level 1 road). Although users have been using the Deschutes NF road in the past, the road is

still classified as closed. This could be considered another possible route pending the Deschutes NF Travel Management Decisions.

- Going south from Ray Benson Sno Park on road 920 extending to road 940 which leads to the SWR will also be left open to motorized mixed use. This route will give motorized vehicles traveling to and from Ray Benson another connection route to our trail system.

Other Regulatory items

- Motorized use will only be allowed on marked, designated roads and trails. There will be no cross country riding allowed in the project area as stated in Forest Plan Amendment #49. This will regulate motorized travel, reduce resource impacts, and still provide for OHV recreational opportunities.
- A noise limitation designated by the Oregon State Law (currently 99 decibels) will be enforced in the area to limit noise disturbance. This decibel level is in accordance with State Law and will suffice for the project area.
- Paddle tires will also be banned from the project area due to the amount of soil displacement that occurs. This is a designated trail system with no sandy areas which is what paddle tires were designed for. The use of paddle tires will only cause more maintenance needs and resource damage for the trail system.

Staging Areas

Alternative 3 modified will provide for two day-use staging and parking areas. These areas will include an information kiosk and a concrete pad for portable toilets to be placed during the summer months. Speed limit will be posted adjacent to the staging area.

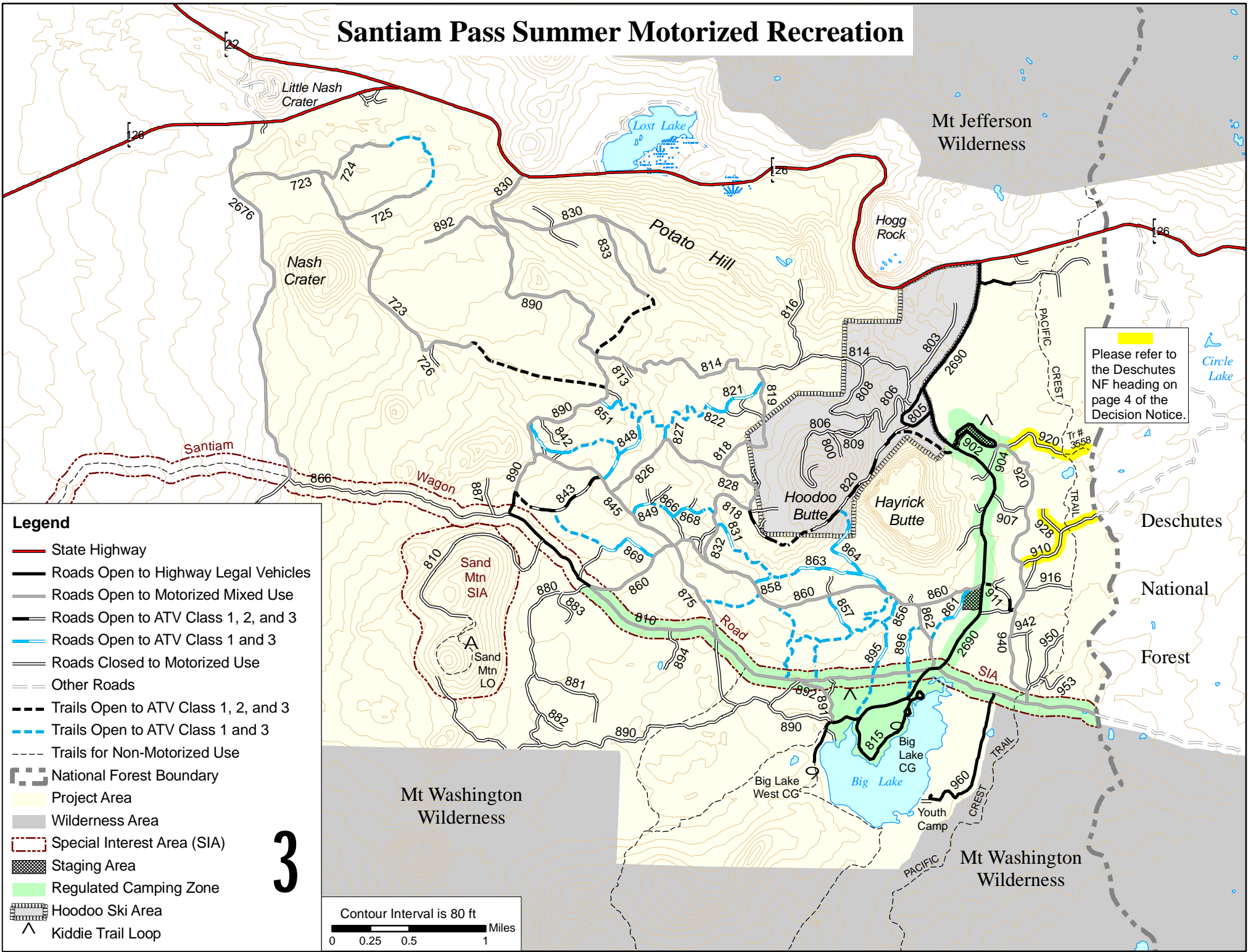
- Two staging areas will be located within the project area. The staging areas provide for good access to roads and trail systems without traveling on the SWR. The staging areas also allow for separation between motorized users and other recreationalist that may not want the added noise or dust associated with OHVs.

1) **Ray Benson Sno Park:** The Ray Benson location will be utilized because it is an established developed area that will require minimal construction and will disperse recreation users onto the trail system.

2) **The junction of road 2690 and 860:** This staging area will be located away from the SWR and the Big Lake Campground. The location was intended to reduce OHV use on the SWR and within the Big Lake Campground by providing another area for OHV users to unload and access the trail system. The staging area will also disperse OHV users away from dispersed camping sites. Vegetation will be planted along the interface of the staging areas and road access to reduce the noise and screen the area from general traffic along Big Lake Road.

Design criteria will include bumpers and planted vegetation to confine use and limit impacts to within the designated area.

Santiam Pass Summer Motorized Recreation

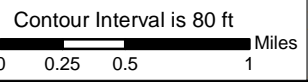


Legend

- State Highway
- Roads Open to Highway Legal Vehicles
- Roads Open to Motorized Mixed Use
- Roads Open to ATV Class 1, 2, and 3
- Roads Open to ATV Class 1 and 3
- Roads Closed to Motorized Use
- Other Roads
- Trails Open to ATV Class 1, 2, and 3
- Trails Open to ATV Class 1 and 3
- Trails for Non-Motorized Use
- National Forest Boundary
- Project Area
- Wilderness Area
- Special Interest Area (SIA)
- Staging Area
- Regulated Camping Zone
- Hoodoo Ski Area
- Kiddie Trail Loop

Please refer to the Deschutes NF heading on page 4 of the Decision Notice.

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Kiddie Trail Loops

There will be two kiddie trail loops developed in the project area. The loops are designed for young riders to use as learning areas therefore speed will be limited. These loops will not allow for cross-country travel and will have designated trails for the riders to follow. These two areas are selected for the following reasons: 1) Minimal construction will be needed, 2) located on relatively easy riding ground making them ideal places to learn, and 3) the two areas are easily accessible.

- 1) A kiddie trail loop area approximately 4-acres will be located near the Ray Benson Sno Park. Existing vegetation and terrain will help reduce the noise and dust between the Ray Benson cabin owners the area.
- 2) The other area will be approximately 18-acres and will be located between the Big Lake Road (2690) and SWR. The kiddie trail loops will provide a much needed area for young riders to develop their riding skills under the supervision of an accompanied adult. Tree and noise reducing vegetation will be established between the trail area and Big Lake Campground

Roads

Roads were selected to be closed or decommissioned to try to reduce road mileage within the area, ultimately reducing the amount of maintenance and cost associated with having open roads. The majority of the roads did not complement or add value to the trail system. Roads were also chosen if any resource damage was occurring, or was leading into sensitive vegetative areas. Some roads that will be closed will remain open to administrative use only. The following road miles are approximated:

- 26.55 miles of road will be open to motorized mixed use
- 8.92 miles of road will be converted to motorized trails
- 8.62 miles of roads will be decommissioned.
- 14.36 miles of roads will be closed to all motorized use (open to administrative use only), many of which were dead end spurs
- 9.79 miles of roads will be open to highway legal vehicle
- All roads south of the SWR will be closed except for road 891 and the roads associated with the Big Lake, Big Lake Youth Camp and Big Lake West Campgrounds. Road 880 and road 890 will remain open to administrative use only. These roads were closed because of conflicts between users, encroachment into the wilderness, and reducing the crossings on the SWR. Noise and dust has also been an issue for the camp grounds in recent years and by closing this route it will eliminate the user conflict in the area. The road closures should also eliminate motorized encroachment into the wilderness, which has occurred in the past off of road 890. This road

closure will eliminate two SWR crossings that were proposed in Alternative 3. All trails and roads will remain open to non motorized user.

- Road 810 leading up to the Sand Mountain lookout will be closed (administrative use only) due to traffic hazards, safety concerns, and resource damage. Sand Mountain Society also expressed concern to the continued violations of an existing Forest Order which prohibits off-road and off-trail use by motor vehicles, mountain bikes, or stock within the Sand Mountain Special Interest Area (stated in EA page 12). By limiting the area to administrative use only it will help alleviate these concerns.
- The SWR will be closed from the 890 junction going west to the project boundary. This portion of the Eno segment is the steepest, rockiest portion of the wagon road. In an effort to protect the SWR I did not see an overall need for this section of the road to remain open to motorized use. This section will allow for non-motorized users to utilize the old wagon road as well.

Trails

- Reconstruct approximately 4.7 miles of user created routes into motorized trails. This reconstruction will help minimize disturbance to the land by using tracks that are already there. The trails will be reconstructed to meet the guidelines from Forest Service Trails Handbook, FSH 2309.18
- Approximately 4.3 miles of new motorized trails will be constructed. These trails were chosen to give OHV users loops which are desirable traits for trail users.
- The loop trail near Ray Benson Sno Park that was proposed in all of the action alternatives was dropped due its close proximity to Hoodoo Recreational Residents.
- The trail that connected road 892 to road 890 was dropped due to wildlife concerns in the area.
- Design guidelines used during trail layout and throughout the project implementation will be consistent with guidelines from Forest Service Trails Handbook, FSH 2309.18. Trail design will also consult the Wernex Motorcycle Trail Guidelines for Design, Construction, and Maintenance and User Satisfaction.
- Trail construction will occur either on previously undisturbed ground, or by incorporating user created tracks.
- No new trails will be constructed within Riparian Reserves.
- User created tracks not incorporated into the system will be closed and rehabilitated.
- User-created tracks proposed for inclusion in the motorized trail system that do not meet motorized trail standards will be reconstructed or narrowed to improve the recreation experience.
- A sign plan and maintenance strategy will be developed for both the designated dispersed camping areas and the motorized trail system in accordance with the December 2005 Forest Service Engineering Manual EM7100-15.

- Trail signing will be provided on all system trails and include directional, interpretive, and difficulty rating.
- The addition of class II users will be included on 2 miles of OHV trails (see map). It was confirmed that the analysis performed on the ground (originally just for class I and III users) was sufficient in determining no adverse effects will be caused by adding class II users to the trails. This will allow more trail access by class II users and will strengthen the OHV spectrum, which was one of the significant issues identified for the project.

Mitigation Measures:

This decision includes the following mitigation measures as described in the EA on pages 57 and 58:

Mitigation Measures	
Cultural Resource Protection	
1	Restore the 6.0 Miles of the wagon road from Eno Road to the Forest Boundary to its 1980s alignment, profile and width. Could include grading the road bed, narrowing the road to the 15-18 ft. range, rehabilitating user-created crossings/play areas.
2	Within the Santiam Wagon Road SIA boundary, block and restore with native vegetation the dispersed campsites that are not designated within the regulated camping zone, and user created tracks
3	Speed limits will be posted on the historic Santiam Wagon Road within the project area on Forest roads 2676-866, 2690-810, and 2690-811, when designated for OHV use, enforceable under a Forest Order.
4	Once on the Wagon Road, all motorized vehicles may get off only at designated crossings or at designated dispersed campsites within the regulated camping zones.
5	Natural barriers will be constructed to protect sensitive resource areas from impacts by motorized vehicles within the project area.
6	In order to extend protection to heritage resources which have not yet been discovered, but which may be uncovered during the course of project activities, appropriate contract language must be included in all project prospectus and contracts which outlines the procedures to follow in the event heritage resources are inadvertently discovered or disturbed during project activities. If material is inadvertently discovered, suspend operations and consult the District Archaeologist.
7	For any modifications to the specified locations of facilities development (trails, crossings, and staging areas) that arise during implementation, consultation with the District Archaeologist will be required. When previously unknown cultural resources are discovered during ground-disturbing operations, work would be halted and the cultural resource site in question would be evaluated as to National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) eligibility by a qualified professional archaeologist. A cultural site discovered during construction of roads or trails may require the redesign of the road or trail, use of protective overburden, or use of an alternative route. Other mitigations that may be utilized include a change in equipment or season of operation, which would require consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and federally recognized Indian tribes before the project work can resume.
Soils and Watershed Protection	
8	New routes will not be designated or constructed within Riparian Reserves.

Mitigation Measures	
9	Re-establishment of vegetation at existing disturbed sites will be through natural re-vegetation, or by seeding or planting of native species only.
Wildlife Protection	
10	Seasonal Restriction would be implemented on tree felling during OHV trail construction from March 1 – July 15 in proximity to TES habitat. Trees that are felled for this project are to be left on site with the exception of the smaller lodgepole pine trees at the proposed staging areas.
Noxious Weed Control	
11	Disturbed areas (road shoulders, staging areas) would be re-vegetated with weed-free native seed to compete with noxious weed seed. Weed-free mulch would be used if necessary.
12	Off road, ground disturbing equipment during implementation will be washed prior to entering National Forest System land. Equipment will be free of all seed and debris that may contain plant seeds such as soil and vegetation.
13	Material brought in for construction, such as fill soil, gravel, and straw will be free of vegetative material and weed seed.

Non-Significant Forest Plan Amendment #49

A Non-significant Forest Plan Amendment (#49) is included in this decision. There were three parts to the Forest Plan Amendment (# 49) according to the EA. However, the proposed amendment to change TR3558 from management area MA-10e (semiprimitive non-motorized) to MA-10b (semiprimitive motorized) will be deferred until after the Deschutes NF completes their Travel Management Planning processes for the area. This means that there will only be two parts to the Non-Significant Forest Plan Amendment # 49 at this time.

1. Management Area Standard and Guideline MA-5a-01 and MA-10b-01 (EA page 33). Those guidelines state that implementation guides shall be completed for a Special Interest Area (SIA) and semiprimitive motorized area. Implementation guides have not been completed for either Management Area Standard or Guideline.
2. The addition of Management Area Standard and Guideline MA-10b-04a will be changed.

From:

MA-10b-04, Access by motorized vehicles shall be limited to snowmobiles, trail bikes and ORVs not greater than 45 inches in width. The general area is open to off-road vehicle use off designated roads and trails.

To:

MA-10b-04a, Within the Santiam Pass Summer Motorized Recreation Area, access by wheeled motorized vehicles shall be limited to traveling only on designated trails and/or roads. The general area is **not** open to off-road vehicle use off designated roads, trails or other specified areas.

The two forest plan amendments are amendments to the Willamette National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan or Forest Plan following the 1982 NFMA planning rule procedures. The current 2008 NFMA planning rule provides for a three year transition period for forest plan amendments (36 CFR 219.14(b)(2)). The Forest Service Manual (1926.51) identifies criteria for changes to a forest plan that are not significant.

1. Actions that do not significantly alter the multiple-use goals and objectives for long-term land and resource management.

One-time exemption of Management Area Standard and Guideline MA-5a-01: Implementation Guides – As discussed in the EA, pages 70-71, a Historic Property Management Plan (HPMP) has been completed for the entire length of the Santiam Wagon Road (MA 5a) on the Forest. The HPMP provides information that is very similar to what would be provided in a Implementation Guide, as described in MA-5a-01. Consequently, the project is consistent with MA goals and objectives and all other S&Gs for MA 5a. Based on the information available in the HRMP, I find that the lack of an Implementation Guide for this project’s action will not significantly alter the multiple-use goals and objectives for long-term land and resource management. Also, as discussed in the EA Chapter 3, the effects of this decision along with all the other action alternatives considered in the EA would provided less adverse impacts on the Santiam Wagon Road, which is the key feature of this 5a MA.

One-time exemption of Management Area Standard and Guideline MA-10b: Implementation Guides – The majority of actions included in this decision occur within MA-10b. The bulk of the project area lays in MA-10b. While an Implementation Guide has not been written for this 10b MA, the EA goes more in-depth then the implementation guide and covers the majority of the MA (EA page 20, table 1). In addition a broad array of enhancement programs as well as acceptable uses and activities in this MA (EA, pages 27-60, Alternatives) was discussed and considered. The actions to be implemented within MA-10b by this decision are consistent with the goals and objectives for the management area as described in the Forest Plan. I find that the lack of an Implementation Guide will not significantly alter the multiple use goals and objectives for long-term land and resource management in this area. My finding is based on the scope of the analysis for this decision as well as the consistency with all other MA standards and guidelines (EA, page 22-23).

Addition of MA S&G, MA-10b-04a: – This Forest Plan amendment will restrict OHV use in the Santiam Pass MA-10b to roads and trails that are identified in this decision. The goals for MA 10b are described in the Forest Plan, and the one most at issue in this decision relates to recreational use in the project area. The goal to, “Provide a full spectrum of recreation opportunities” within the MA was recognized in the Purpose and Need for the project (EA, page 5-6). The diversity of recreation uses was also identified in several of the significant issues considered in the EA (pages 12-13). While the decision will impose limits on motorized use throughout the MA, a variety of motorized and dispersed recreation will still be allowed within the 10b MA as explained in the effects analysis of the EA (chapter 3). Also, this amendment applies only to MA 10b (EA page 7-8). I do not find that this amendment significantly alters the multiple use goals and objectives for long-term land and

resource management in this area because the amended S&G allows for a full spectrum of recreation opportunities, including motorized use, and it is limited in geographic scope to the 10b MA in the Santiam Pass Summer Motorized Recreation project area.

2. Adjustments of management area boundaries or management prescriptions resulting from further on-site analysis when the adjustments do not cause significant changes in the multiple-use goals and objectives for long-term land and resource management.

The Forest Plan amendment for a one time exemption from MA 5a-01 and MA 10b-01 is not an adjustment to a management prescription. It is an exemption from a Forest Plan procedural requirement and does not involve adjustments to either management area boundaries or changes to management area prescriptions.

Addition of MA S&G, MA-10b-04a: This decision, which includes the new S&G MA-10b-04a, continues to provide a spectrum of OHV opportunities in the affected area (EA, page 62). The modification of S&G MA-10b-04a for the MA in the Santiam Pass project area will result in changes in current patterns of dispersed motorized use. It will not eliminate motorized use from the area, and applies only to summer use (EA page 28, 47). MA-10b-04a is consistent with the Forest Plan goals and objectives for MA 10b and does not significantly alter multiple-use goals either for this particular area, MA, or the Forest Plan as a whole.

3. Minor changes in standards and guidelines

One time exemptions to MA-5a-01 and MA 10b-01: These standards and guidelines are not being permanently changed through this amendment. Rather, only the actions included in this decision are permitted to proceed prior to completing an Implementation Guide (EA, page 7). In addition, for the reasons previously stated, the actions approved in this decision are consistent with the goals and objectives for the respective management areas and with all other management area standards and guidelines. Because the actions are consistent with the Forest Plan direction and the exemption from the Implementation Guide requirement is limited to the activities approved in this decision, I find that this is a minor change to MA-5a-01 and MA 10b-01.

Addition of MA-10b-04a: The addition of this standard and guideline is a modification of MA-10b-04 and applicable only to the MA 10b in the Santiam Pass project area. The change in the specification of vehicle size and weight from MA 10b-04 is because of change in industry standards for OHVs and State of Oregon classification since the MA S&G has been written. The addition to MA-10b-04 is consistent with the intent of the original standard (EA Glossary, page 114). The effect of MA-10b-04a is to change off-road/cross country motorized travel for the Santiam Pass area from open to closed. This change applies only to summer use (wheeled vehicles) and not to winter use by snow machines (EA, page 33). While the new S&G will restrict some off-road use in the project area it will allow continued use of some of the more popular user created routes which will be converted to designated trails (EA, page 34-35). Although the result will be a reduction of

opportunities for some types of dispersed motorized use in the project area, off-road users will continue to have trail riding opportunities (EA, pages 79-80). The new standard does limit motorized use, but the magnitude or intensity of the change is limited because no previous uses are eliminated and the scope of the change is limited to summer uses within the Santiam Pass project area. I find the addition of MA-10b-04a to be a minor change to the Forest Plan.

4. Opportunities for additional projects or activities that will contribute to achievement of the management prescription.

One time exemptions to MA-5a-01 and MA 10b-01: The project is designed to achieve the management prescriptions for all Forest Plan management areas affected by this project (EA, pages 3-6, 20-24). The lack of formal Implementation Guides does not detract from nor limit the ability to implement activities that will achieve the approved management prescriptions.

Addition of MA-10b-04a: The management goals for MA 10b in the Forest Plan include a goal to provide a full spectrum of recreation opportunities for a semi-primitive motorized experience, as well as a goal to provide users the opportunity to experience a sense of solitude, tranquility, self-reliance, and closeness to nature. While MA-10b-04a will limit the extent of motorized use by closing cross country travel, it does not eliminate motorized use in the MA. It will, however, help balance the various uses and recreation opportunities in the Santiam Pass area to better meet all the Forest goals for MA 10b (EA, pages 76-87). By restricting motorized use to designated roads and trails, the amendment will help to ensure the success of activities in MA 10b as well as in MA 5a (EA, pages 70-76).

Forest Plan Amendment Non Significance

Based on the totality of the four factors identified in FSM 1926.51 and the evidence presented in the EA for this project, I find that the changes made in this decision will not significantly alter the relationship between levels of multiple use goods and services originally projected in the Willamette National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan.

Monitoring:

Monitoring to determine the effectiveness of the actions implemented by this decision is crucial. District enforcement of these regulations will also be of priority and important for effectiveness. However, the success of the project will be primarily based on the education and on how well users comply with regulations defined in this decision, such as speed limits and prohibitions on cross country travel. Therefore, an adaptive management approach will be required to ensure that the purpose and need of the project is being fulfilled. Implementation monitoring will highlight actions that result in desired conditions and also those that potentially do not. If certain actions prescribed in the decision are being ineffective, the forest will adapt, taking appropriate measures to resolve the problem. Appropriate

measures may result in another decision being made, in which the Forest will do whatever NEPA analysis and administrative actions are deemed necessary at that time.

The district will fully explore a variety of actions to mitigate problems identified by monitoring. Examples of potential actions include increasing enforcement or presence in the area(s); lowering or adding speed limits in given problem area(s); increasing signage in area(s); restricting which type of user classes that are allowed to utilize the road(s) or trail(s) (i.e. changing trails from class 1 and 3 to just class 1 if the class 3 riders are causing the problem(s)); and closing the road(s) to all users.

Monitoring (As stated on page 59 and 60 of the EA):	
1	Recreationists would be periodically surveyed to aid in determining trends in total numbers and types of trail system users, changes in their levels of satisfaction with their recreation experience, and changes in the number of conflicts occurring.
2	Project activities would be monitored by the District Resource Specialists during project implementation for compliance with design criteria. Periodic monitoring of trail use, application of mitigation measures, effectiveness of resource protection measures, user compliance, law enforcement needs, education efforts, maintenance and reconstruction needs, estimates of funding needs, and effects of other management activities on this project would be evaluated and documented.
3	Monitoring would also be conducted periodically to determine the compliance levels on newly designated trails and marked crossings on the Santiam Wagon Road. If noncompliance is a constant problem, it would be addressed through rerouting or closure of that trail segment.
4	Monitoring would be conducted to develop a history of accidents or near misses on roads designated as motorized mixed-use
5	Monitoring for changes in existing populations or new occurrences of noxious weeds will be done for the project area.
6	Regular monitoring of the Wagon Road, the SIA, and other heritage sites by the district archaeologist or other cultural resource personnel is essential to insure protection of the resource after implementation of this project.

V. DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

If no appeal is made within the 45 day period, implementation of the project will begin immediately. However, it could take up to 7 years to fully implement the entire decision because there are multiple improvements requiring construction like staging areas, connector trails and kiddie trail loops. Cross-country travel will be prohibited as soon as the project is implemented. The extended project implementation time frame will restrict some users of the area. For example, until the kiddie loop is constructed there will be no trail devoted to youth learning due to the prohibition of cross-country travel. Another example is in some cases there may be trails that go to certain points that dead end due to the connecting trails not being designated yet. The user will have to turn around and return on the same trail.

Established open forest roads will be left open with the exception of roads closed by this decision. Roads may be temporarily closed during construction of new trails, if deemed necessary. All open roads will be posted with a sign indicating its open status and the class(es) of vehicles allowed. If a road is not posted open it will be considered closed.

Protection of the SWR will be a high implementation priority. Signage of trails that are open and posting speed limits will also be a priority. This will give users information of where they are allowed to

go and get them there safely. Also informational areas with maps will be provided within the project area as well as the District Ranger Station. This will allow users to easily distinguish which routes will be currently open. The district will receive state funding this year to provide patrols, education, and enforcement of the project area.

VI. DECISION RATIONALE

This decision is a difficult one because the project is complex, attracting differing public interests, opinions, and concerns. However, the need to act to protect important resources, while providing multiple recreational opportunities for the public is evident. Balancing the need to provide for multiple quality family recreational opportunities and resources protection is part of the direction provided by the Willamette National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan.

One of the major issues in trying to provide for multiple recreational opportunities with in the same area is that some activities may conflict with each other. Comments from the public included OHV enthusiasts that desire more opportunities and non-motorized recreationalists, like hikers and equestrians, who want OHV use seriously limited or even banned from the area in a few cases. The continued use of segments of the Santiam Wagon Road also generated a number of comments that expressed concern about OHV impacts to this historic feature.

OHV use in the project area is a polarizing issue, but my decision is based on best meeting the project's purpose and needs, which directly address the concerns expressed about resource impacts, most notably the Santiam Wagon Road, and the range and quality of recreation opportunities provided in the project area.

I have carefully read and considered the effects discussed in the environmental assessment and the comments received. I also considered applicable laws, the WNF Plan, and how well each alternative met the purpose and need for the project. The project record shows a thorough review of the relevant scientific information, a consideration of responsible opposing views, and the acknowledgment of incomplete or unavailable information, scientific uncertainty, and risk. I am selecting Alternative 3 Modified to actively move toward the desired condition in the WNF Land and Resource Management Plan, to meet the identified purpose and need, to better address the significant issues identified during scoping, and to incorporate input from the public as well as other agencies during the comment period

VII. DECISION RELATED TO SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

Issue 1. Santiam Wagon Road SIA

The SWR will be open to motorized mixed use between the project boundary going west to road 860. The road will then be open to highway legal vehicles between the 860 road and the 890 road. The SWR will be closed to all motorized use from the 890 road going west to the project boundary. This decision rehabilitates all 6.0 miles of the SWR within the project area to the historic route, profile, and width. It will provide for 3 OHV crossings and rehabilitate all user-created OHV crossings not incorporated into

this action. Dispersed camping along the SWR will be regulated and camping will be limited to no more than 20 designated dispersed camping sites along the designated camping zone. Approximately 18.9 acres of existing dispersed camping sites in the Regulated Camping Zone will be made unavailable and rehabilitated. Enforced speed limits will be posted between 10-25 mph depending on location. The decision will allow for motorized use on a portion of the SWR while still protecting it. Alternative 3 modified is also designed to provide motorized use access to dispersed camping. Although Alternatives 4 removed all OHV use along the SWR, in looking at all of the other issues brought to attention by this project, Alternative 3 modified is the best choice. The monitoring and enforcement that will follow this decision, along with the concurrence of SHPO and our Heritage Resource Specialist, I am confident that this decision will protect the SWR.

Issue 2. OHV Spectrum of Opportunity

This decision will provide approximately:

- 28 miles of open roads to motorized mixed use
- 4.5 miles of trails that will be open to Class I and III only
- 2.5 mile of trail that will be open to class I, II, and III
- 8 miles of roads will be converted to motorized trails
- 9 miles of roads will be open to highway legal vehicles

Two staging areas will provide good opportunities for users to unload and load OHVs with locations situated for easy access to the trail system. The two kiddie trail loops will also provide for an opportunity for youth to have a supervised low speed learning area. Alternative 3 modified also will develop many trails leading to loops, which is desirable for OHV users. These loops will provide for many different opportunities. Although this decision is not the best of all the alternatives for OHV users alone, when weighing the other issues of the SWR and recreational user conflicts, it provides the most opportunity for OHV users.

Issue 3. Recreation User Conflicts

Alternative 3 modified will designate 20 dispersed camping sites within the Regulated Camping Zone. A combination of campsite configuration and distribution will be designed to provide multiple gathering opportunities. Speed limits of 10-15 mph near trail crossings, dispersed camping, and Big Lake Camp Ground will reduce conflict with noise and dust, as well as providing for safety of all recreational users.

This decision will reduce the total number of motorized crossing along the Pacific Crest Trail from 9 to 2. Informational signing and barrier placement will help prevent unintentional motorized access along the Pacific Crest Trail corridor again reducing conflict between users.

Closing the SWR to all motorized travel west of road junction 890 as well as closing the road leading up to Sand Mountain (administrative access only) will provide for non-motorized activities to occur along the SWR and Sand Mountain.

Due to prohibiting OHV cross-country travel within the project area, hikers, horse users, and bicyclists will have access into non-motorized trails or areas without encountering motorized users, reducing the potential for user conflict.

Two trail access points at Big Lake Campground and the removal of a parallel user created trail along the Big Lake Road (north of the campground) will reduce noise and dust associated with OHV use around the Campground. A second kiddie trail loop at Ray Benson will allow for another area for OHV youth to learn. The Ray Benson's kiddie trail loop will have a low potential for conflict with residences located there due to the low speeds and adult supervision that will present within the kiddie trail loops. An area education and enforcement plan will be developed and implemented in the project area. Information boards will be located at staging areas and other popular areas to give users easy access to information regarding the trails.

VIII. OTHER ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

All of the action alternatives met the purpose and need for the project and were all considered as alternatives. Alternative 1 did not meet the purpose or need and was not considered a valid alternative. After thorough review of the EA and public comments, no one alternative seemed to fit the additional concerns expressed by all of the different user types. The reason for not picking Alternative 2 was because it did not protect the SWR and other resources as well as Alternative 3 or 4 did. Although Alternative 3 does protect the resources more than Alternative 2, I felt it did not address the issues as well as Alternative 3 modified does. I did not feel that Alternative 4 provided as much OHV recreation use in the project area, consequently Alternative 4 was not chosen. Alternative 3 modified provides for more OHV recreation while still protecting the resources and user conflicts at hand.

IX. FINDING of NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

After considering the environmental effects described in the EA, I have determined that these actions will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment considering the context and intensity of impacts (40 CFR 1508.27). Thus, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared. I base my finding on the following:

A. Context

This decision is consistent with achieving the goals, objectives and requirements in the WNF Resource and Land Management Plan identified for the management areas within the project area (Chapters 2 and 3), while meeting the purpose and need of the EA. This decision is analyzed in several contexts such as society as a whole, the affected region, the affected interests, and the locality (40 CFR 1508.27).

B. Intensity

I have determined the following with regard to the intensity of the project. Bold items are directly from 40 CFR 1508.27:

1. **Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse. A significant effect may exist even if the Federal agency believes the effect will be beneficial.** There will be no significant environmental effects associated with actions to be implemented as stated in the EA in chapter 3 (pages 63-119). My finding of no significant environmental effects is not biased by the beneficial effects of the action.
2. **The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.** There will be no significant effects on public health and safety. Public safety was a major concern that was addressed throughout the EA. Trail design and other development features such as speed limits, signage, and location will be implemented to reduce any health or safety concerns regarding OHV use in the area. Specific public health and safety issues raised and addressed in the EA include:
 - The owners of the summer homes in the Hoodoo recreational resident permittees voiced safety concerns regarding the use of Ray Benson as a staging area. I feel this is not a significant health or safety concern because cross-country travel will not be permitted in the project area. Terrain and vegetation will also serve to buffer use as it does in the winter time when Ray Benson's is used as a staging area for snowmobiles.
 - OHV-user creating dust was also expressed as a health and safety concern; however, speed limit restrictions in congested areas and near camping sites address this concern and will help keep dust to a minimum amount. Therefore I did not feel that this was a significant health or safety concern.
 - Mixed recreation use (motorized and non-motorized) in an area does come with some inherent risk; however, the project area has plenty of opportunities off motorized trails for non-motorized users to recreate with little conflict between users. Motorized users will only be allowed to travel on designated trails which will reduce mixed recreation encounters and potential safety issues.
3. **Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.** There are no park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, or wild and scenic rivers within the project area; therefore, there will be no effect. The EA and Project Record provide sufficient information to determine that this project will not significantly impact any ecologically critical areas or historic or cultural resources (EA chapter 3).

A cultural resource survey has been completed on all proposed improvements. Two segments of the Santiam Wagon Road (Eno segment and Sand Mountain segment) are located within the project area as well as the Sand Mountain SIA. The surveys were conducted according to an

inventory plan approved by the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). Mitigation measures to protect and restore the SWR are listed in the EA (page 57) and Decision Notice, resulting in no significant impact on historic or cultural resources (EA, page 109). As noted in the EA on page 57 in the event that new heritage resources are discovered, appropriate measures will be included in the contract language which outlines the procedures to follow during project implementation. The Sand Mountain SIA will be protected more due to this decision by only allowing administrative use on road 810. All other motorized traffic within the SIA will not be allowed.

- 4. The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.** The quality of their human environment will remain similar because OHV riders will still be able to recreate in the project area and other OHV designated areas throughout the state and region. This decision will increase the quality of the human environment because of the added health and safety precautions implemented by the decision. Providing for mixed recreational opportunities with limited conflicts due to designated trails and no cross-country travel will also be an improvement to the human environment in the local area.

Most of the comments received consisted of opinions as to which alternative I should select or opinions on possible improvements to certain alternatives. The degree of controversy expressed by comments on the project does not warrant the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The EA effectively addresses and analyzes all issues and environmental impacts associated with this project (EA, Chapter 3, pages 63-119).

- 5. The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.** OHV cross-country travel has been prohibited in many recreational areas nationwide. Numerous forests and organizations have experience in developing and implementing successful OHV trail systems, including the (Huckleberry Flats Trail System on the Middle Fork Ranger District). The degree to which possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks is very low for the implementation of this project. This is based on the fact that development of OHV trail systems is relatively a common practice within the agency, in addition to the district staff's expert knowledge of the area and its resources.
- 6. The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.** Designated trail systems have been established nationally and unregulated OHV use is one of the top threats to forests health in the nation (EA page 3). My decision will not establish a precedent for future actions because nationally designated motorized trails have already been established.
- 7. Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts. Significance exists if it is reasonable to anticipate a cumulatively significant impact on the environment. Significance cannot be avoided by terming an action temporary or by breaking it down into small component parts.** I have

reviewed the impacts of those past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions described in the Environmental Consequences section of the Santiam Pass Summer Motorized Recreation Project EA and find that this action will not have any significant cumulative impact on the environment. See Chapter 3 in the EA (pages 63-119) for more discussion.

Several comments were received that suggested this decision should be delayed and incorporated into the Travel Management Planning process. Planning for the Santiam Pass area was intentionally site specific due to the existing high motorized mixed use which occurs in the area. The Travel Management Planning process (called “road management planning” in the EA) is to implement the Travel Management Rule which will be much broader in scale and will address motorized access on all existing routes on the forest. The Plan will still require site specific decisions to be developed for developing or closing routes under separate NEPA, as is the case with the Santiam Pass Summer Motorized Recreation Project. At this time, the Forest has not established a proposed action for the Forest-wide process and several months of public scoping and involvement will drive that process. Because of the history of motorized use, the high level of public use, and public interest in the Santiam Pass area, this decision needs to be addressed independent and before the Forest-wide Travel Management Planning process.

- 8. The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.** This decision will not cause loss or destruction of any resource listed on or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The SWR has been identified as being eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Previously known or cultural sites discovered during the project implementation will be avoided.

Documentation to SHPO was completed in September 2007 and again in November 2007, with a “determination of No Historic Properties Adversely Affected” and “no adverse affect on any known cultural resources” respectively. Because SHPO and our zone archeologist agree I am confident that implementation of this decision will have no significant impact on resources listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

- 9. The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.** The action will not adversely affect any endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species act of 1973. Felling of trees associated with trail construction and staging area for this project will be within predominately open lodgepole pine stands, which is not considered to be critical habitat for any of the threatened or endangered species (TES) in the area. The project will not significantly impact TES.

- 10. Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.** Laws imposed for protection of the natural and human environment provided the framework for the Willamette National Forest Land and

Resource Management Plan. From the documentation provided in the EA (pages 109-114), the project file, and Other Findings Required by Law (below), I find that the proposed decision does not violate any Federal, State, or local law or requirements.

X. FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS and REGULATIONS

I find that this decision (with the non-significant amendment #49) is consistent with the Willamette National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan as amended. This decision meets the long-term goals and objectives of the Forest Plan (IV-2 to IV-44) and was designed in conformance with applicable Forest Plan standards and guidelines.

The decision is consistent with all applicable Acts and Regulations such as the Willamette National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, National Forest Management Act (NFMA) of 1976, National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973, Clean Water Act (CWA) of 1972 and section 319 of the 1987 CWA, Civil Rights Act (CR) of 1964, Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRAs) and Wilderness, Executive Order 11644: Use of off-road vehicles on the public lands, Executive Orders 11988 and 11990: Floodplains and Wetlands, Executive Order 12898: Environmental Justice, Executive Order 12962: Recreational Fishing, Executive Order 13186 on Neotropical Migratory, The Preservation of Antiquities Act of June 1906 and the National Historic Preservation Act of October 1966, The Preservation of Antiquities Act, and. (EA, Chapter 3).

XI. ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW or APPEAL OPPORTUNITES

Only individuals or organizations that submitted comments or otherwise expressed interest during the EA comment period have standing to appeal this decision. Notice of Appeal must meet the requirements of 36 CFR 215.14. Appeals can be submitted in several forms, but must be received by the Appeal Deciding Officer, Regional Forester, within 45 days from the date of publication of this notice in the Register-Guard, Eugene OR.

Appeals may be:

1. Mailed to: Appeal Deciding Officer, Regional Forester; ATTN: APPEALS, P.O. Box 3623, Portland, OR 97208;
2. Emailed to: appeals-pacificnorthwest-regional-office@fs.fed.us. Please put APPEAL and the project name in the subject line. Electronic appeals must be submitted as part of an actual e-mail message, or as an attachment in Microsoft Work (.doc), rich text format (.rtf), or portable document format (.pdf) only. E-mails submitted to addresses other than the ones listed above or in formats other than those listed above or containing viruses will be rejected. It is the responsibility of the appellant to confirm receipt of appeals submitted by electronic mail;
3. Delivered to: Pacific Northwest Regional Office, 333 SW First Avenue, Robert Duncan Plaza Building, Portland Oregon between 8 am and 4:30 pm, M-F; or

4. Faxed to: Regional Forester, ATTN: APPEALS at (503) 808-2255

The office business hours for those submitting hand-delivered appeals are: 8:00 am to 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. Electronic appeals must be submitted in a format such as an email message, plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), or Word (.doc) to the email address above. In cases where no identifiable name is attached to an electronic message, a verification of identity will be required. A scanned signature is one way to provide verification. The notice of appeal must meet the appeal content requirements at 36 CFR 215.14.

XII. IMPLEMENTATION DATE

If no appeal is filed within the 45-day time period, the USDA Forest Service will begin to implement the Santiam Pass Summer Motorized Recreation Project five business days after the close of the appeal period. The appeal period starts on the date the legal notice of the decision appears in the Register-Guard, which is in Eugene, Oregon. When appeals are filed, implementation may occur on, but not before, the 15th business day following the date of the last appeal disposition

XIII. CONTACT PERSON

For additional information concerning this decision the primary contact is Steve Otoupalik, Wilderness / Trails Manager, McKenzie River Ranger District, 57600 McKenzie Highway, McKenzie Bridge, Oregon 97413; by telephone at 541-822-3381; or email at sotoupalik@fs.fed.us. The secondary contact will be Kurt Steele, Forester, McKenzie River Ranger District, 57600 McKenzie Highway, McKenzie Bridge, Oregon 97413; by telephone at 541-822-7214; or email at ksteele@fs.fed.us.

/s/ Dallas Emch

October 21, 2008

Dallas Emch
Forest Supervisor
Willamette National Forest

Date

VIII. PUBLIC COMMENTS and AGENCY RESPONSES

On December 17, 2007, the Santiam Pass Summer Motorized Recreation Project was made available to the public and other agencies for a 30-day public review and comment period in accordance to 36 CFR 215. This was made by legal notice in the Register Guard, located in Eugene, Oregon, which is the newspaper of record for the Willamette National Forest.

There were 95 individual comment letters/phone calls received with fourteen of them postmarked/received after the 30 day formal comment period ending date of January 16, 2008. All comments were reviewed and discussed by appropriate resource specialists and officials. My decision will be based on all of the information provided in the Environmental Assessment and the public comments. Comment letters received are in the project file. This information is organized by subject with similar comments grouped together followed by the FS response in italics.

Roads and Trails

The area was “surveyed and found” that “FS Road 890 (which passes through the narrow space between the Sand Mountain SIA and the Mt. Washington Wilderness Area) dips into “the Mt. Washington Wilderness Area.”

In Alternative 4 this road would be closed to OHV use (as shown on Alternative 4’s map). The issue has been fully considered and the Ranger’s recommendation would be not to allow OHV access on this road.

During the 1990 Forest Plan development it was noted that the western portion of Road 890 appeared to trespass into the Mt. Washington Wilderness Area. The boundary along that section of the Mt Washington Wilderness was surveyed by the Forest survey team, and it was confirmed that the road dipped into the wilderness. Consequently, the road was closed with rocks at the junction of 890 and 880. The error was in the GIS database and spatial layer, which has now been corrected. On all of our Alternatives that section of road is indicated as closed to motorized traffic and will be decommissioned.

“The Analysis in the EA is Deficient because it Fails to Address Use of Roads and Trails that Cross into the Adjacent Deschutes National Forest”

The Ranger’s plan is to defer the decision about road 2690-920 turning into trail 3558 and road 910, until the Deschutes NF completes Their Travel Management planning process.

The McKenzie River Ranger District and Deschutes National Forest have worked together since the project initiation. The Deschutes National Forest actually co-signed the original Project Initiation Letter. Comments from the Deschutes National Forest on this issue have been addressed as well.

Our decision would not result in the construction of new roads or trails that lead into the Deschutes National Forest. On pages 13 and 87 of the EA it is noted that the Santiam Wagon Road continues into the Deschutes National Forest. The Santiam Wagon Road has always extended into the adjacent forest and would not be changed.

“In locations where the Forest Service is considering designating OHV routes in the Mt. Washington IRAs”

There are no designated routes in any Inventoried Roadless Area. Maps of IRA locations have been reviewed again to affirm this.

“User-created routes” are “unlikely to be ecologically or fiscally sustainable.” The Forest Service should not be rewarding the individuals who made the trails by keeping them in place especially when the routes were not engineered to sustain the amount of traffic that occurs on the trails.

All user-created routes that are designated to be incorporated into the decision have been surveyed for sustainability, terrain, soil conditions and location. All of the routes will be reconstructed to current Forest motorized trail construction standards for intended use patterns.

“The Santiam Wagon Road needs more protection”

The decision maker will provide the best protection to the SWR while still maintaining the purpose and need of the project.

“Adhere more closely to the process of developing the Travel Management Plan on the same timelines that the other forests in the State of Oregon are using...”

This plan is following CFR 212.55, and is on schedule of following the Forest Management Plan for the future.

Winter Recreational Vehicles

“The Forest Service’s decision to limit the scope of the EA’s analysis to summer terrestrial use of motorized vehicles and not address other motorized uses such as watercraft on Big Lake and winter snowmobile use could also be in violation of NEPA’s ‘hard look’ requirements.”

Winter and watercraft use is not addressed in depth within the EA because it is outside of the scope of the Santiam Pass Summer Motorized Recreation Project. Summer recreation was causing the need for action in the project area. Snowmobiles travel above the ground and cause very little if any resource damage.

“Regardless of what restrictions may be in place for summer travel, the over snow travel has minimal effect to the historic value of the wagon road if imposing vegetation is removed to a width suitable for grooming.”

Winter activities are outside of the scope for this project.

Executive Order 11644

“Areas and trails shall be located to minimize damage to soil, watershed, vegetation, or other resources of the public lands.”

One of the main reasons for developing this project was to minimize the effects that OHV have on our natural resources while at the same time providing for OHV recreational opportunities (EA page 3-6). Alternative 1, which is the no action plan (the current condition) is least in compliance of this Executive Order. All of the action alternatives would move us in the direction of compliance (EA page 72). Other factors that we considered are listed in the “Mitigation Measures” starting on page 57.

“Areas and trails shall be located to minimize harassment of wildlife or significant disruption of wildlife habitats.”

Full consideration to wildlife has been looked at and can be reviewed in the EA starting on page 95 going through 101. Again one of our reasons for developing this project is to try to minimize the effects that OHV use has on our natural resources while at the same time allowing OHV use to proceed. Leaving the area in its current condition would probably have more harassment issues due to the fact OHV’s are not limited to where they can go. Any of the action alternatives would in fact reduce harassment type issues.

“Areas and trails shall be located to minimize conflicts between off-road vehicle use and other existing or proposed recreational uses of the same or neighboring public lands, and to ensure the compatibility of such uses with existing conditions in populated areas, taking into account noise and other factors.”

Consideration was given to projected noise and dust levels in the Big Lake Campground, dispersed camping spots, Pacific Crest Trail, along the Santiam Wagon Road, and the Summer Cabins northwest of Ray Benson Sno-Park. By limiting the existing motorized crossings along the Pacific Crest Trail we will be reducing noise, dust and disturbance to that trail system. Page 86 of the EA discusses reduction of noise to “recreational residences” due to vegetative cover, (trees and brush). See above for discussion on “neighboring public lands.”

“Areas and trails shall not be located in officially designated Wilderness Areas.”

This has been discussed in the Environmental Consequences section of the EA on page 104. Refer to the Mt Washington North and West Inventoried Roadless Areas. Also see above comments on trails in wilderness areas.

Executive Order 13112 (noxious weeds)

“Not in compliance with Executive Order 13112”

On page 92 of the EA the potential project effects on the distribution and density of Noxious Weeds are discussed

Pacific Crest Trail

“The EA Does Not Contain Adequate Discussion of the Potential Adverse Impacts Associated with Motorized Recreational Use in Proximity to the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail.”

Throughout the EA the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail (PCT) was discussed. Starting on page 29 under “Issue 3”, and then continued on pages 36, 42, 47, 54, 77, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, and 87. The only motorized travel in close proximity to the PCT will be a designated motorized crossing that will be located at previous road junction. Any of the action alternatives will be an increase in security for the PCT by designating proper trail systems and signage, as well as not allowing off trail riding.

The Conversion of the Ray Benson Sno Park to Accommodate Summer OHV Use Would Exacerbate the Potential for OHV Trespass onto the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail.

No off trail travel will be permitted within the project area. All designated motorized crossing of the PCT will be controlled to eliminate motorized access to the trail. Enforcement of motorized trespass along the Pacific Crest Trail will be a priority.

“The EA fails to protect the Pacific Crest Trail.”

The current condition does the least to protect the PCT. Any of the action alternatives will provide increased restrictions and more protection for the PCT. The PCT was considered and referenced throughout the EA and the Line Officer has all the information provided on the issue to make a sound decision.

Forest Plan Amendment #49: proposed action violates standards and guidelines of MA-10e in the LRMP and NFMA of the PCT

See page 45 in the EA for amendments.

Ray Benson Sno Park

Trails proposed in “the proximity of the Ray Benson snow park,” may allow users to gain access to the cabin area.

Any motorized cross-country trespassing around the recreational residences would be in violation of this decision and subject to a citation and fine. The loop trail east of Ray Benson’s was also dropped.

Environmental Impacts

“The EA has no discussion of the cumulative environmental effects of OHV management along an analysis of past effects or reasonably foreseeable future effects such as timber harvest. The Deschutes National Forest planning effort (see EA at 2) is clearly a connected action, but the cumulative effects of implementing the Santiam Pass Summer Motorized Recreation Project and the Deschutes planning effort goes unanalyzed.”

See chapter 3 of the EA starting on page 63 and extending to 109 for extensive discussion on impacts. This decision will not have any new routes going into the Deschutes National Forest

OHV rule

“The Santiam Pass Summer Motorized Recreation Project EA does not implement the OHV rule”

(1) Damage to soil, watershed, vegetation, and other forest resources;

Soils and Watersheds are discussed in the EA on page 66-68. Mitigation measures for soils and watersheds are listed on page 58. Vegetation is discussed in the Botany section of the EA starting on page 88.

(2) Harassment of wildlife and significant disruption of wildlife habitats;

Wildlife is discussed in the EA on page 95-100. See above for additional comments on wildlife. Fisheries are discussed in the EA on page 93-95.

(3) Conflicts between motor vehicle use and existing or proposed recreational uses of National Forest System lands or neighboring Federal lands; and

Conflict between users is stated to be in compliance with Executive Order 11644 on page 110-111 and also in depth discussion on page 82. The recreation section of the EA in Chapter 3 (page 76-88) discusses this. See above for conflicts between neighboring Federal lands.

(4) Conflicts among different classes of motor vehicle uses of National Forest System lands or neighboring Federal lands.

The recreation section of the EA in Chapter 3 (page 76-88) discusses conflicts among users. See above for discussion on neighboring forests.

In addition, the responsible official shall consider:

(5) Compatibility of motor vehicle use with existing conditions in populated areas, taking into account sound, emissions, and other factors.

On page 37 of the EA it states that we will be enforcing the state noise limit of 99 decibels. Vegetation screening would also take place in attempt to reduce the noise impacts to areas. Noise was a major concern in the scoping letters and was discussed throughout the EA.

“The EA needs to explain how this complies with the OHV rule, the National Historic Preservation Act (16 USC Sec. 470) and the Antiquities Act (16 USC Sec. 431-433).”

The Heritage Resources specialist report and compliance letter from the SHPO provide the decision maker with the appropriate information to make an informed decision.

Aquatic Conservation Strategy

“The EA does not demonstrate compliance with the Aquatic Conservation Strategy.”

As stated in the “Forest Plan Consistency” on page 112, the project is “designed to be consistent with the 1994 Northwest Forest Plan, amendments to the Forest Plan, and the Aquatic Conservation Strategy objectives.”

Heritage Resources

The Heritage Resources portion of the EA expresses concern about undiscovered cultural resource sites...this needs to be addressed

The EA address this on page 57-58 under mitigations measures 6 and 7.

“All of these Alternatives, however, still do not address concerns about providing motorized access to fragile resources in the northern end of the Sand Mountain Volcanic Alignment...”

Re-defining the LMP allocations is beyond the scope of this document. Expanding the boundary of the SIA is not part of the purpose and need of this project. No new trails, outside of existing roads are designated into the cinder cones north of Sand Mountain. Motorized cross-country travel in all action alternatives will be prohibited off designated trails. Due to past trespass occurrences into the cone alignments to the north of Sand Mountain would be a priority for enforcement patrols.

Staging Areas: “concerned about possible effects to a prehistoric archaeological site adjacent to the travelway...”

Number 5 of page 57 discusses mitigation measures that will be taken to address this concern.

Suggestions to “consider a closure of the Santiam Pass Motorized Recreation Area until such time as restoration of the area is completed...”

The plan for the project is to allow rehabilitation to take place while still providing for all recreational opportunities.

The EA does not “recognize the significance of an eligible National Register site traversing the project areas, the Santiam Wagon Road.”

The EA recognizes the Santiam Wagon Road as eligible to the National Register of Historic Places on page 5 of the EA, “Considering that this historic road is eligible for inclusion to the National Register of Historic Places, there is a need to rehabilitate Santiam Wagon Road to the original profile and width. There is also a need for action to protect this heritage resource from further impacts from recreational OHV use.”

The Forest Service ignored the “recommendations of the Oregon Historic Trails Advisory Council in 2005 (Morse) and 2007 (May)...All of EA alternatives conflict with the goals and objectives of HPMP”

On page 35 of the EA it states that all action alternatives would restore displaced road surface material along the 6.0 miles within the project area on both the Eno and Sand Mountain segments. The EA also explains how attempts to return the road profile to its original width and alignment will take place. All action alternatives would include a speed limit on portions of the Santiam Wagon Road that would be open to motorized Vehicles. Both of these actions will improve the current condition of the Eno and Sand Mountain segments which is consistent with the HPMP.

“Activities encouraged will be those that do not degrade the historic integrity of the resource and will result in a future condition that maintains or improves the integrity by terminating incompatible activities within the SWR SIA corridor...”

Page 35 of the EA state that all action alternatives regulate OHV use in the project area, regulate camping within the Santiam Wagon Road SIA, and impose a speed limit on the Santiam Wagon Road to prevent moguls, road widening and other adverse effects to the Wagon Road.

The current proposal doesn't support the National Register of Historic Places or Special Interest Area.

The Zone Archaeologist consulted with SHPO on the Project and received concurrence on a No Adverse Effect based on the Cultural Resource Design and Mitigation.

Sand Mountain Society Alternative

Why wasn't the SMS Alternative used

It is defined in the EA on page 27 why the Sand Mountain Society's alternative was not used. The SMS alternative did not fully meet the purpose and need of the project; however, an attempt was made to take key parts of the alternative and incorporate them into the different alternatives that were listed.

Enforcement

Enforcement was a concern of many individuals. As stated in the monitoring part of EA page 59, monitoring the affects of the decisions will be implemented.

Banning Paddle Tires due to erosion potential

Due to a number of comments, and the displacement of soil associated with paddle tires, paddle tires will not be allowed in the area

Camping

Questions if Mosquito Lake will be “included as a dispersed campsite or ascribed as a protected habitat for wildlife?”

Road 894 that provides motorized access to Mosquito Lake will be closed to all motorized travel and decommissioned. No motorized trails will be designated into the lake area. Dispersed camping will be permitted at the lake but access would only be via foot, horseback or bicycle. With all action alternatives motorized cross-country travel will be illegal.

Regulated Camping Zones: “does not seem consistent with the HPMP for the SWR, which favors maintaining the SWR to its traditional width and appearance”

The HPMP does not directly discuss dispersed camping along the SWR. Dispersed camping has historically taken place along the Santiam Wagon Road in several areas not just at Cayuse Horse Camp. Under the EA dispersed camping becomes regulated with designated campsites. Each designated camp site will be rehabilitated under each alternative and some will be permanently rehabbed and closed. Under the HPMP unregulated use is seen as having a high impact on historic properties. Regulating dispersed camping and placing a speed limit along the SWR will help improve the integrity and condition of the historic route and prevent further moguls and road widening.

Miscellaneous

“OHV funds are for OHV trails systems only and on these trails all users need to have an OHV permit on their vehicles. All trails for OHV should be reviewed by the OHV community for authenticity before OHV funds are sought after.”

As funding becomes available, it will be used in accordance with State Revenue Agency. The Forest Service has no jurisdiction where funds go.

Restrict use of the SWR to hikers and horse only, before irreparable damage is done.

On page 70 and 71 of the EA discusses historical use of the Santiam Wagon road. The purpose and need statement starting on page 3 of the EA gives the reason why this project was proposed.