



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Willamette National Forest
McKenzie River Ranger District

57600 McKenzie Hwy.
McKenzie Bridge, Oregon 97413
Tel (541) 822-3381
FAX (541) 822-7254

File Code: 1950-1

Date: December 14, 2007

Re: Santiam Pass Summer Motorized Recreation Project
Environmental Assessment

To: Interested Public:

The McKenzie River Ranger District has prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Santiam Pass Summer Motorized Recreation Project, and it is now available for 30-day public review and comment. The EA can be viewed on the Willamette National Forest web site at www.fs.fed.us/r6/willamette/. You may also request a copy of the document by contacting the Ranger District at the number listed above.

The EA examines three action alternatives that would designate roads, trails, and other areas for motorized recreation vehicle use within the 13,850-acre project area. A majority of area is managed as MA-10d, Dispersed Recreation, Semiprimitive Motorized. The project area also includes the Big Lake Campground Complex, Hoodoo Ski Area, and the Santiam Wagon Road and Sand Mountain Geologic Special Interest Areas.

All action alternatives include an amendment to the Willamette Forest Plan which would restrict OHV use in the project area to only designated roads, trails, and other specified areas, meeting the need to protect resources from unregulated OHV use. The amendment in Alternative 2 also changes Management Area designation of two travel corridors within the project area to provide routes over the Cascade Crest to connect roads and trails on the Deschutes National Forest. The Forest Plan amendment and other changes to management in this project would be specified in Forest Orders upon implementation. Project implementation is estimated to begin during the summer of 2008.

The purpose and need for this project is to designate a system of roads and trails for Off Highway Vehicles (OHVs) within the Santiam Pass Summer Motorized Recreation Project Area as directed by the Willamette National Forest Land and Resource Plan. The proposed action and all action alternatives respond to this need as well as the need to rehabilitate existing OHV impacts to the Santiam Wagon Road while protecting this important heritage resource into the future. The project is also needed to provide recreation opportunities in the Santiam Pass area that offer a quality family-oriented experience.

This EA analyzes three action alternatives to designate Forest roads as open to motorized mixed-use, with Alternative 2 designating the most at 37.2 miles and Alternative 4 designating the least at 17.8. Forest roads would also be designated for All Terrain Vehicle (ATV) Class I & III only, with Alternative 4 designating the most at 14.5 and Alternative 2 the least at 7.6 miles. The action alternatives also construct new ATV Class I & III trails, with Alternative 2 constructing the most at 12.3 miles and Alternative 4 the least at 9.3 miles. Some new trails would



incorporate existing user-created tracks. The project also closes and decommissions undesignated Forest roads. The alternatives also block and restore existing dispersed campsites along the Big Lake Road and the Santiam Wagon Road at differing amounts.

Approximately 6.0 miles of the historic Santiam Wagon Road within the project area would be rehabilitated as a part of this action to restore the roadway to its historic route, profile, and width. Alternative 2 designates all 6.0 miles of the wagon road as open to motorized-mixed use, with Alternative 3 designating only 3.8 miles as motorized mixed-use. Alternative 4 includes 4.2 miles of the wagon road but it restricts use to highway legal vehicles only.

All alternatives include two day-use staging areas designed for unloading OHVs from trailers and vehicle parking. The staging areas would include sanitation facilities and user information kiosks. Alternative 2 includes a 22-acre open play area would be located at the west portion of the project area, and an 18-acre “kiddie loop” youth learning trail area near the Big Lake Campground. However, Alternatives 3 and 4 would not include the open play area, and Alternative 4 would not include the youth learning trail near the Big Lake Campground.

Project scoping began in February 2005 with the release of the proposed action to the public. Two additional alternatives, Alternatives 3 and 4, were developed in response to the following three significant issues that were identified after considering over 200 comments received during scoping, as well as from two public meetings held in Eugene and Sisters, Oregon in the summer of 2005. The significant issues relate to: 1) Effects of the proposal on the Santiam Wagon Road Special Interest Area, 2) Effects on OHV Spectrum of Opportunity, and 3) Effects on Recreation User Conflicts. The two alternative actions meet the purposes and needs stated above, and are designed to further reduce future impacts to the historic Santiam Wagon Road and to other forest resources by placing additional limitations on OHV use in the project area.

The project area is located in the Upper McKenzie Watershed. Legal description is: T.13S, R.7E, Sections 13-15, 22-27, 34-36; T.13S, R.7 1/2E, Sections 21-28, 33-36; T.14S, R.7 1/2E, Sections 1-3, 10-12; and T.14S, R.7 1/2E, Sections 1-4, 9-12, 15 and 16; Willamette Meridian; Linn County, Oregon.

Reviewers should provide the Forest Service with their comments during the 30-day comment period. The Responsible Official is Forest Supervisor Dallas Emch. Comments may be submitted to me Mary Allison, District Ranger, McKenzie River Ranger District, 57600 McKenzie Highway, McKenzie Bridge, OR 97413, (541) 822-3381, fax (541) 822-7254. The Ranger District Office is open from 8:00 am until 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday, excluding legal holidays. Electronic comments must be submitted to: comments-pacificnorthwest-willamette-mckenzie@fs.fed.us. [note this is a corrected email 1-7-08]

I will accept oral, electronic, and written comments during the comment period, which ends 30 days from the date this notice is published in the Register-Guard, Eugene, OR, the Forest's official newspaper of record. It is the responsibility of all individuals and organizations to ensure their comments are received in a timely manner. For electronically mailed comments, the sender should normally receive an automated electronic acknowledgement from the agency as confirmation of receipt. If the sender does not receive an automated acknowledgement of the receipt of the comments, it is the sender's responsibility to ensure timely receipt by other means.

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to Forest Service regulations at 36 CFR 215. Appeals must meet the content requirements of 36 CFR 215.14. Only individuals or organizations who submitted comments or expressed an interest in the project during the comment period may appeal. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered; however, those who only submit anonymous comments will not have standing to appeal the subsequent decision under 36 CFR Part 215.

Additionally, pursuant to 7 CFR 1.27(d), any person may request the agency to withhold a submission from the public record by showing how the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) permits such confidentiality. Persons requesting such confidentiality should be aware that, under the FOIA, confidentiality may be granted in only very limited circumstances, such as to protect trade secrets. The Forest Service will inform the requester of the agency's decision regarding the request for confidentiality, and where the request is denied; the agency will return the submission and notify the requester that the comments may be resubmitted with or without names and addresses.

For any information about the project you may contact the District Recreation Trails Manager Steve Otoupalik at 541-822-3381, (or by email at sotoupalik@fs.fed.us). Thank you for your interest in this project.

Sincerely,

MARY ALLISON
District Ranger