

Evans Creek ORV Area Management Plan Decision Notice And Finding Of No Significant Impact (FONSI)

USDA Forest Service
Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest
Snoqualmie Ranger District
Pierce County, Washington

T17N, R07E, Sections 5, 8, 9, 16-21, 28 and 29,
Willamette Meridian

The Snoqualmie Ranger District, Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest has completed the Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Evans Creek ORV Area Management Plan project. Minor changes were made to the pre-decisional EA provided in public comments. The use of the term “jeep trail” was dropped in the EA because jeep refers to a brand name. The correct term is “dual-track trail” and this term is now used throughout the document. The EA is available at the Snoqualmie Ranger District office located at 450 Roosevelt Avenue, Enumclaw, Washington or on the Internet at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/mbs/projects/>.

Decision

After reviewing the Evans Creek ORV Area Management Plan EA, Wildlife, Fish, and Botany Biological Evaluations, specialist reports, applicable Forest Plan direction, and public comments for the proposed Evans Creek ORV Area Management Plan, it is my decision to implement **Alternative 2**. This Alternative is hereafter called the “Selected Alternative.”

This alternative is described in Chapter 2 of the EA and compared with the other analyzed alternative in Table 12 of the EA. Figure 1 in Appendix D below, is a map of the Selected Alternative. Decision Notice Appendix A contains the Management Requirements and Mitigation Measures that are integral parts of the Selected Alternative. This decision will implement a management plan that will include the upgrading/redesign of area facilities (campground, day use and entrance area); road treatments including decommissioning/closing approximately 11.2 miles, converting approximately 9.63 miles to trail, upgrade approximately 2.14 miles and constructing approximately 0.1 mile of new road; trail treatments including approximately 28.7 miles of maintenance, approximately 1.35 miles of decommissioning, approximately 0.25 miles converted to road and decommissioning/obliteration of user built trails; provide for user safety through use of signage and traffic controls; and establish an operating season.

Specifically this decision will implement:

- Upgrading and redesign of the area facilities (Campground, Day-Use, and Entrance).

- Road treatments (upgrades, conversion to trail, construction, decommissioning).
- Trail treatments, both dual and single track trails (upgrades, decommissioning).
- Improved user health and safety requirements.
- A revised operating season, separate from the current Forest-Wide Trail Closure, that is specific to the ORV trails and facilities.

My decision also includes:

- Closure of Forest Service Road (FSR) 7920 from its junction with FSR 7800 (Carbon River Road) south to its junction with Trail 199 (approximately 2.4 miles).
- Decommissioning of FSR 7920-280, -281, -300, -410, -610, FSR 7930 (between Trail 519 crossings and beyond junction with Trail 1151 to end), -310 (from its junction with 311 to end), -320, -330, -410, -414, -418, and -419 (approximately 8.8 miles).
- Obliteration of all existing user built trails (approximately 3.0 miles).

Rationale for the Decision

I selected Alternative 2 because it best meets the project purpose and need (objectives) and best addresses the key issues. In particular, the Selected Alternative will:

- Decommission select roads and trails, obliterate user built trails, repair other roads and trails to a level that meets management standards for depth, width, drainage, tread, etc., and will establish an area specific operation season to be consistent with the Forest Plan, as amended. This will reduce erosion and sedimentation due to on-going road and trail use activities. (EA pp. 7, 41-44, 64-66, 74-75, 82, 100-102, 123-124)
- Convert select roads to trails to reduce potential conflicts between users, create loop opportunities, provide for safe access to trails and facilities, and meet Forest-wide Roads Analysis Objectives to be consistent with the Forest Plan, as amended. (EA pp. 7, 8, 44, 65-66, 74, 82, 100-102, 109-112, 123-124)
- Redesign and increase capacity of the campground to meet the needs of current users, redesign and provide parking and traffic controls for the day-use and entrance area, and install additional outhouse at entrance area to provide for increased sanitation and safety of users to be consistent with the Forest Plan, as amended. (EA pp. 8, 37-41, 66, 96-100, 110-111, 123-124)
- Replace or remove undersized culverts on Evans Creek that restrict movement of resident fish (up and down stream) to be consistent with the Forest Plan, as amended. (EA pp. 8, 41-42, 65-66)

A detailed description of The Selected Alternative (Alternative 2 is found in Chapter 2 of the EA, with a Comparison of the Alternatives by Elements shown in Table 12. Figure 5 in the EA and Figure 1 Appendix D of this Decision Notice display a map of The Selected Alternative).

Other Alternatives Considered

One other alternative was considered in detail—Alternative 1 (No Action).

I did not select Alternative 1 (No Action) because it failed to achieve the project's Purpose and Need, or Forest Plan goals and objectives (Chapter 1 of the EA). Specifically, Alternative 1 would not convert roads to trails, create loop opportunities, provide for safe access between trails and facilities, redesign

facilities, increase capacity at campground, remove culverts from Evans Creek, establish an area specific operation season, or decommission roads.

The Interdisciplinary (ID) Team and public comments did not identify other issues that would have led to development of an additional action alternative that would meet the project objectives (Chapter 1 of the EA).

Best Management Practices, Constraints, Mitigation Measures and Monitoring

My decision also includes the design features and mitigation measures specific to this project to avoid adverse effects on recreation, soils, streams, fish, wildlife, cultural resources, air quality, and for limiting the spread of noxious weeds. In addition, this decision includes monitoring of design features and mitigation measures to evaluate implementation of the management plan activities as described in the EA (pp. 37-46) and their effectiveness of meeting the project purpose and need elements. Descriptions of project elements and mitigation measures are provided in Table 11 (pp. 49-57) of the EA, and in Appendix A of this Decision Notice. Monitoring plans are included in Appendix B of this Decision Notice, and Appendix I of the EA.

Forest Plan Consistency

I have reviewed the Environmental Assessment (EA) for the project including the environmental effects and Forest Plan Consistency sections for each affected resource (EA Chapter 3). My decision to adopt Alternative 2, the Selected Alternative, is consistent with the goals, objectives, standards and guidelines of the Land and Resource Management Plan for the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest (Forest Plan), as amended (see EA p. 15 for major amendments). The action will not alter the multiple-use goals and objectives for long-term land and resource management.

My conclusion is based on a review of the Project Record that shows a thorough review of relevant scientific information, consideration of public comments, and the acknowledgement of incomplete or available information, scientific uncertainty, and risk.

Watershed Analysis: The Carbon River watershed is not a Key watershed. The Carbon River Watershed Analysis was completed in 1998 (USDA Forest Service 1998) (EA p 31).

Riparian Reserves (EA pp. 17 and 19): My decision will be consistent with Riparian Reserves standards and guidelines and Aquatic Conservation Strategy objectives. Activities that will occur in whole or part within Riparian Reserves include facilities improvements, road upgrades, road decommissioning, road closure, road converted to trail, trail upgrades, trail decommissioning that directly and indirectly address drainage concerns while improving public safety and directing use. Decommissioning of the current campground access road will restore fish passage and help prevent in-channel crossing. Other facilities, road, and trail improvements, decommissioning (including user built trails), and conversions will reduce sedimentation associated with use, which will improve water quality (Riparian Reserves Standards and Guidelines RF-2, RF-3, RF-4, RF-5, RF-6, RF-7, RM-1, RM-2) (EA pp. 26-27, 68-69, 84-85, 103).

Late Successional and Old Growth (EA pp. 16 and 18): The Evans Creek ORV Area Management Plan will be consistent in that road construction will be kept to a minimum and implemented to provide a higher level of road safety. Road maintenance activities will remove only enough woody debris to ensure safe driving conditions. A fire management plan contains direction for control and containment strategies for the Evans Creek area. Tribal treaty rights are not effected by the project. The plan utilizes traffic controls, will establish a user agreement for better education and ownership, and provide for better long-term maintenance of the area. Barricades will be used to discourage off-road travel in vulnerable habitats (EA pp. 24-26, 84, 86, 89, 103, 125).

Matrix - Management Area 1D (MA 1D), Roaded Natural (EA pp. 16-17 and 18): The Evans Creek ORV Area Management Plan will be consistent in that road construction will be kept to a minimum, implemented to provide a higher level of road safety, road maintenance would remove only enough woody debris to ensure safe driving conditions. A fire management plan contains direction for control and containment strategies for the Evans Creek area. Tribal treaty rights are not effected by the project. The plan utilizes traffic controls, will establish a user agreement for better education and ownership, and provide for better long-term maintenance of the area. Barricades will be used to discourage off-road travel in vulnerable habitats (EA pp. 24-26, 84, 86, 89, 103, 125).

Matrix - Management Area 17 (MA 17), Timber Management Emphasis (EA pp. 16 and 18): The Evans Creek ORV Area Management Plan will be consistent in that Road 7920 (lower 2.4 miles from Road 7800) will be closed and reduced to Maintenance Level 1 to maintain future harvest opportunities if desired (EA p. 105).

Other Forest-Wide Standards and Guidelines (EA pp. 20-23): The Evans Creek ORV Area Management Plan will be consistent with other Forest-Wide Standards and Guidelines in that streamside trees will not be removed, temperatures will be maintained, and measures in Appendix H of the EA would minimize turbidity and sediment. The EA assessed the effects of proposed activities to threatened and sensitive fish species (there are none considered “endangered”) and found that activities will not contribute to these species becoming federally listed or lead to a change in their listing status.

Threatened, endangered and sensitive plant species and there habitats were taken into account by Botanists during both pre-field reviews and field surveys. All of the actions that meet the purpose and need will benefit ecosystem diversity and function.

Review of heritage records and databases have been completed. Scoping letters were sent to individuals and Government-to-Government Tribal contacts. Review of historic records and appropriate databases were conducted in an attempt to locate previously documented resources in the area. Field surveys were conducted and overseen by the Forest Archaeologist. Cultural Resource Inventories were documented and forwarded to the Forest Archaeologist for review. No evidence of Indian use has been found.

Trails will be repaired to meet current design standards for difficulty and health and safety while meeting other resource requirements. Trails will be prioritized and scheduled for work starting

with the most damaged. These trails will be closed until conditions are brought up to standards. Portions of the existing road system will be converted to trails to establish loop trail opportunities that will reduce two-way traffic and minimize the occurrence of user-built and go-a-round trails in the future. User built trails would be eliminated, using natural barriers and signage to minimize future occurrence. Facilities will be redesigned and reconstructed via seasonal closures, traffic control devices, increased maintenance, and periodic monitoring to ensure ACS is being met. Eliminate dispersed camping after campground is complete to ensure health and safety through proper sanitation. Establish a seasonal closure to protect resources. Coordination between staff and volunteers in accomplishing cost effective maintenance will ensure facilities and trails are kept to standard (EA pp. 68, 72-73, 89-90, 103-105).

Issues Addressed by Alternative 2

Issue 1 – Facilities Design:

The existing facilities (campground, day-use and entrance areas) were originally designed in the early 1980s and use has expanded beyond the original design standards creating an unsafe situation for users. Size and types of vehicles used for camping and trail riding have changed dramatically. Demand for space to camp and park (loading/unloading) currently outweighs availability (EA pp.37-41 and 58-59).

The area facilities will be redesigned and upgraded to be consistent with the Forest Plan which will result in improved user safety by designating parking and use patterns, increasing capacity in both day-use and overnight areas, and increase in sanitation facilities (EA pp. 92-94).

Issue 2 – Soil Health and Quality:

Existing and proposed roads and trails – including both user built and National Forest System (NFS) – are or may adversely affect soil health and quality by accelerating erosion, modifying soil moisture regimes, and reducing infiltration capacity of soils due to the compaction of the travel ways (EA pp. 41-44).

Roads and trails will be improved, converted to trail, closed or decommissioned in a manner as to obtain consistency with the Forest Plan. These efforts will result in an overall reduction in the number of combined miles of roads and trails thereby reducing the amount of permanently compacted or disturbed soils. The new Resource Closure periods will allow for event based closures. This will exclude use of areas during extremely wet periods, allowing for infiltration and reduced potential for accelerated erosion (EA pp. 107-110).

Issue 3 – Sedimentation:

Sediment currently entering Evans Creek from the campground and its access road and Evans and Poch Creek, from various roads and trails could continue without the implementation of the proposed action. This sediment contributes to the degradation of fish habitat and water quality (EA pp. 38-39 and 42-45).

The proposed activities will result in an overall reduction of sediment delivery to streams within the area and will contribute to an increase of water quality within the project area. The campground redesign and access road change will eliminate a known sediment source and will contribute to an increase of access to habitat for resident fish species utilizing the system. In all, the project will result in the restoration of a more natural sediment regime (EA pp. 65-66 and 110-112).

Public Involvement and Tribal Consultation

The Evans Creek ORV Area Management Plan project was initially listed in the Quarterly Schedule of Proposed Action (SOPA) for the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest dated January 2007 – March 2007. On March 21, 2007, the Forest Service mailed letters to Tribes (Muckleshoot, Puyallup, Yakama, and Duwamish) and to persons on District mailing lists, requesting comments on the proposed Evans Creek ORV Area Management Plan project (EA p. 137). On June 28, 2007, the Snoqualmie Ranger District hosted an open house to discuss this project with more than 70 people in attendance. The Forest Service received a total of 58 written responses to the 2007 scoping efforts. Refer to Appendix A of the Evans Creek ORV Area Management Plan EA and the Project Record for consideration of comments received.

On December 3, 2008, a legal notice announcing the availability of the EA was published in the Enumclaw Courier-Herald, initiating the 30-day pre-decisional comment period. Additionally, individual notices were sent to those who had participated in the scoping process or who had requested a copy of the EA, including individuals and groups. Tribal Chairpersons and other identified contacts of the Muckleshoot, Puyallup, Yakama and Duwamish Tribes were also sent notices. Copies of the pre-decisional EA were made available by request or on-line. Five responses (4 individual/group and 1 Tribal) were received within the established comment period. Substantive comments received and how they were addressed in the EA are available in Appendix C of this Decision Notice.

Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)

I have evaluated the effects of the project relative to the definition of significance established by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations in 40 CFR 1508.27. I have reviewed and considered the February 2009 Environmental Assessment for the Evans Creek ORV Area Management Plan, which is incorporated by reference herein. Based on the above, I have determined that the Selected Alternative (Alternative 2) will not have a significant effect on the human environment. For this reason, no environmental impact statement (EIS) will be prepared. My rationale for the FONSI follows, organized by subsection of the 40 CFR 1508.27 definition of significance.

1. *Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse. A significant effect may exist even if the Federal agency believes that on balance the effect will be beneficial [40 CFR 1508.27(b) (1)].*

The proposed project context (society as a whole, affected region, affected interests, and locality) was reviewed, and the intensity (severity) of the negative impacts as a result of implementing Evans Creek ORV Area Management Plan is minor. The short-term impacts for a long-term benefit include minor short-term increases to sediment input that will not result in measurable or observable changes in the Carbon River sediment load and temporary trail and facilities closures during construction or maintenance activities to ensure user safety (EA pp. 65-66, 99-101, 109-112).

The project will provide long-term benefits within the project area by:

- Improving area facilities to address current needs and safety of the users and correct resource deficiencies consistent with the Forest Plan.

- Improving area trails to meet Forest Service Trail Standards to provide for safety of users and correct resource deficiencies consistent with the Forest Plan.
- Decommissioning, closing, improving, and converting-to-trails identified roads within the area to reduce soil productivity issues, sedimentation, erosion, and increase user safety by eliminating mixed use and providing loop trail opportunities.
- Obliterating user-built trails within the area to reduce sedimentation and soil erosion.
- Establishing a single entrance and exit point from the area by closing or removing unauthorized access points.
- Establishing an area specific Operation Season that includes provisions for closures in times of extreme rain fall and a winter closure period for wildlife concerns.

2. *The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety [40 CFR 1508.27(b) (2)].*

Public health and safety will be protected by providing adequately sized and traffic controlled facilities, adequate sanitation (toilets, water), a trail system that has designated use and loop opportunities, access to and between trails and facilities, improved water quality and minimizing potential impacts to area users by temporarily closing areas, or planning construction and maintenance activities during low use periods (such as weekdays) to prevent conflicts (EA pp. 7, 8, 11-14, 37-44, 54, 58-59, 96-105).

3. *Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as the proximity to historical or cultural resources, parklands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers or ecologically critical areas [40 CFR 1508.27(b) (3)].*

A cultural resource inventory and report was completed and submitted to the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) for review and response. The project will have “*No Effect*” to known historic properties associated with American Indian or Euro-American heritage resources listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). SHPO concurred with this finding (EA pp. 53-54, 88-90).

4. *The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial [40 CFR 1508.27(b) (4)].*

The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial is considered low. Common issues of controversy over effects on past Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest projects include impacts on the large tree component and associated wildlife habitat, impacts on peak flows, and road management actions that change public access or have negative impacts on water quality and aquatic habitat.

No existing large tree component or associated wildlife habitat will be removed as a result of the project activities (EA pp. 123)

There will be no measurable or observable impact to flow regime, including timing, frequency, intensity, or duration of peak flow events (EA pp. 111-112). In addition, road and trail upgrades, decommissioning, obliteration, and closing activities will reduce the risk of sediment delivery to streams (EA pp. 110-111).

The selected alternative will alter road access in three ways. Portions of FSR 7920 and FSR 7930 will be converted to trails and while these roads will still be accessible by vehicle, the type of vehicle needed would change to high-clearance. Many of the area roads that were identified in the Forest Roads Analysis will be decommissioned or closed, eliminating access to these dead-

end areas. The last 2.4 miles of FSR 7920 (MP 7.1 to end) will be closed to vehicular access to eliminate unauthorized alternate access to the area. The portion of FSR 7920 from the entrance to the day-use area will be improved by spot rocking, brushing, and culvert replacement which will increase the lifespan of the road. These activities will result in a reduced risk for road prism failure while protecting and restoring resources. All of these changes will contribute to the cumulative management of the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest road system, which in turn will contribute towards a better alignment of road maintenance levels with projected Forest road maintenance budgets (EA pp. 74-75, 88, 101-102).

5. *The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks [40 CFR 1508.27(b) (5)].*

This decision will not have effects that are highly uncertain or involve unknown risk. The Evans Creek ORV Area has been in existence in this area since 1980. While any action carries some degree of risk, the Selected Alternative was designed and the analysis summarized in the EA was carefully completed to minimize unique or unknown risk. In addition, the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest implementation procedures for facilities construction/reconstruction, road reconstruction/decommissioning/closure, and trail reconstruction/decommissioning will ensure that the effects will be similar to those predicted in the EA. The effects on the human environment of implementing the Evans Creek ORV Area Management Plan are not expected to be highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks (Chapter 3 of the EA).

Project design features and mitigation measures have been developed to ensure adverse effects to the human environment are reduced or eliminated (DN Appendix A and EA pp. 49-57), and monitoring has been included to evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of key project design features.

6. *The degree to which the action may establish precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration [40 CFR 1508.27(b) (6)].*

This action is unlikely to establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or to represent a decision in principle about a future consideration.

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 [40 CFR 1508.27(b) (7)].*

For an action to contribute to cumulative effects there has to be some kind of additive or interactive effect. The cumulative effects of the alternatives and the past, present, and foreseeable future actions are disclosed in Chapter 3 of the EA, in conjunction with Appendix C of the EA. The EA discloses there will be no significant cumulative impacts by implementing the Evans Creek ORV Area Management Plan, including foreseeable future actions (Chapter 3, Environmental Effects, under each resource section, and Appendix C of the EA).

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 [40 CFR 1508.27(b)(8)].*

Cultural surveys of the project area were conducted with review by the Forest Archeologist; one historic resource was recorded. The site will be protected from project activities through project design to avoid the site, and through mitigations measures outlined in the EA (EA pp. 53-54). The State Historic Preservation Office has concurred with the Archeologist's "no adverse effect" determination (Project Record). If new sites are found during project implementation, work will

be halted in the area of the find, the Forest Archaeologist will be notified and the Forest will fulfill its responsibilities in accordance with the Programmatic Agreement and other applicable regulations (EA p. 54).

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 [40 CFR 1508.27(b) (9)].*

Informal Section 7 consultation on the Evans Creek ORV Area Management Plan was completed in July of 2008 with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service staff concurrence on the following effects determinations. The selected alternative will result in “*No Effect*” to grizzly bear, grey wolf, and “*Not Likely to Adversely Affect*” to northern spotted owl and marbled murrelet, and would result in “*No Effect*” to critical habitat designated for the recovery of the spotted owl and “*Not Likely to Adversely Affect*” critical habitat designated for the recovery of marbled murrelet. With the proposed Evans Creek ORV Area Management Plan there exists a potential for noise disturbance to murrelets during construction and reconstruction activities in areas adjacent to old-growth forest (suitable nesting habitat). This potential disturbance has been consulted with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for conservation measures to minimize the potential impacts (See wildlife mitigation and effectiveness in Chapter 2).

The fish species and special habitats of management interest in the Evans, Poch, Tolmie and Voigts Creek subwatersheds are shown in the Project Record. For federally listed fish and special habitats, the Selected Alternative would cause “*No Effect*” to federally listed Chinook, steelhead; “*May Affect, Not Likely to Adversely Affect*” to federally listed bull trout; “*No Effect*” to designated Chinook or bull trout critical habitat; and this alternative “*Would Not Adversely Affect*” essential fish habitats for Chinook, coho, or pink salmon (EA p. 67).

For other fish species with special status (Forest Service Sensitive and MBS management indicator species), there would be “*No Impact*” to coho, sockeye, coastal cutthroat (anadromous), pink, or chum salmon; for rainbow trout and resident cutthroat, the effect determination from proposed activities is “*Impact Individuals, Not Likely to Trend Toward Listing*”, with a net beneficial effect (EA p. 67).

The Biological Assessment prepared for consultation with FWS and the Biological Evaluation assessing impacts to the Regional Forester’s Sensitive Species can be found in the Project Record at the Snoqualmie Ranger District office in Enumclaw, WA.

10. *Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment [40 CFR 1508.27(b) (10)].*

The project is designed to meet all applicable Federal, State, and local laws (Chapter 3 of the EA, Forest Plan Consistency pp. 68 to 136).

National Forest Management Act Consistency Findings

The Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest Plan, as amended, was developed and approved (1990) using the provisions of the planning rule in affect prior to November 9, 2000 (the 1982 planning rule). The Forest Service now has a new planning rule (36 CFR 219, published in the Federal Register on April 21, 2008) referred to as the 2008 planning rule. The 2008 rules specifically states at 36 CFR 219.14(b)(4) that, for plans developed under the 1982 planning rule, the 1982 planning rule is without effect. There remain no obligations from that regulation, except those that are specifically in the plan. The only requirement specifically provided in the 2008 rule related to projects is at 36 CFR 219.8(e), requiring that projects and activities must be consistent with the applicable plan components. As required by 36 CFR

219.8(e), I have found that this project is consistent with Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest Plan, as amended. For my consistency findings, refer to the “Forest Plan Consistency” section above.

Findings Required By Other Laws and Regulations

My decision is consistent with all applicable laws and regulations (Chapter 1 pp. 28 to 30; Chapter 3, applicable laws and regulations in each resource section, and other effects pp. 61 to 136 of the EA). It also meets Forest Plan direction and applicable standards and guidelines (Chapter 1 pp. 18 to 28 and Chapter 3 Forest Plan Consistency in each resource section).

Administrative Appeal

This decision is subject to administrative appeal pursuant to 36 CFR Part 215, only by those individuals and organizations who provided comments or otherwise expressed interest during the 30-day comment period on the EA. The appeal must meet the requirements at 36 CFR 215.14.

The appeal must be filed with the Appeal Deciding Officer, Forest Supervisor, Attn: 1570 Appeals, 2930 Wetmore Avenue, Suite 3A, Everett, WA 98201.

Appeals may be faxed to (425) 783-0214, sent electronically to appeals-pacificnorthwest-mtbaker-snoqualmie@fs.fed.us, or hand delivered to the above address between 8:00 AM and 4:30 PM, Monday through Friday except legal holidays.

Appeals, including attachments, must be filed within 45 days after the publication date of this notice in Enumclaw Courier-Herald, the newspaper of record, Enumclaw, Washington. The publication date in the newspaper of record is the exclusive means for calculating the time to file an appeal. Those wishing to appeal this decision should not rely upon dates or timeframe information provided by any other source.

Electronic appeals must be submitted as part of the actual email message, or as an attachment in a rich text format (.rtf) or Microsoft Word (.doc) format. E-mailed appeals must include the project name in the subject line. 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.

It is the appellant’s responsibility to provide sufficient project- or activity-specific evidence and rationale, focusing on the decision, to show why the Responsible Official’s decision should be reversed.

It is the responsibility of each individual and organization to ensure their appeals is received in a timely manner. For electronically mailed appeals, the sender should normally receive an automated electronic acknowledgement from the agency as confirmation of receipt. If the sender does not receive such an automated acknowledgement, it is the sender’s responsibility to ensure timely receipt by other means.

Project Implementation

Implementation of project activities is expected to begin in 2009.

Implementation of this project decision cannot begin until the 15th business days after the disposition of any appeal, depending on the nature of that resolution. If no appeal is filed, implementation of the decision may begin on, but not before, the 5th business days after the close of the appeal period.

Contacts

For further information, contact me by telephone at (425) 888-1421 ext 230, at the Snoqualmie Ranger District office, 902 SE North Bend Way, Building 1, North Bend, WA 98045; or Stephanie Swain, ID Team Leader, at the Snoqualmie Ranger District, 450 Roosevelt Avenue East, Enumclaw, WA, 98022 or by telephone at (360) 825-6585 ext 206.

/s/ JIM FRANZEL

JAMES FRANZEL

District Ranger

March 16, 2009

Date

Appendices

Appendix A: Project Elements and Mitigation Measures

Appendix B: Monitoring Summary Sheets

Appendix C: Public Comment and Responses from 30-Day Comment Period

Appendix D: Evans Creek ORV Area Management Plan Selected Alternative Map

Appendix A: Project Elements and Mitigation Measures

The following are standard best management practices (BMPs), management constraints, and mitigation measures, included as part of the Selected Alternative. These BMPs, constraints, and mitigation measures were incorporated from resource specialist reports located in the project record and the EA (p 48-57). Estimated mitigation effectiveness, or the basis for effectiveness, is described with each mitigation measure.

Mitigation Measure or Project Design Feature	Objective	Effectiveness and Basis	Forest Plan Standard & Guideline	Enforcement
Fisheries				
During proposed resource closure season, when the likelihood of sedimentation is high, evaluate trails and close as warranted, per monitoring plan described in soils report.	Prevent silt-laden water from entering streams.	Mitigation Measure HIGH (Logic, other ORV areas)	Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines (S&Gs): RM-2, RF-7 BMPs (USDA FS 1988) : R-9, R-20, Rec-6, W-8	Seasonal closure order, LEO or other FS patrols
During the potential spring resource closure period, which coincides with the spawning period for resident trout, monitor whether use in and around Evans Creek is disturbing fish or damaging redds.	Prevent harassment and damage to fish and spawning areas during spawning season.	Mitigation Measure HIGH (Logic)	Forest Plan S&G: RM-2 BMPs: REC-6, W-8	Seasonal closure order, Education, LEO or other FS patrols
If work is in the active channel, divert water around the project site. All water intakes used for a project, including pumps used to isolate an inwater work area, will have a fish screen installed, operated, and maintained according to WDFW criteria.	Minimize effects to fisheries resources.	Management Practice HIGH (Logic)	BMP: R-13 MOU between the FS and WDFW for hydraulic projects (2005) provision	Contract Specifications and Administrator
Excess materials (spoils) will be disposed of and stabilized so they do not enter stream channels.	Minimize sedimentation to fisheries resources.	Management Practice HIGH (Logic)	BMPs: R-5, R-14, W-9 Forest Plan S&G: RF-2	Contract Specifications and Administrator
Erosion control methods will be used to prevent silt-laden water from entering the stream. These may include, but are not limited to, straw bales, silt fencing, filter fabric, check dams of pea gravel-filled burlap bags or other material, and/or immediate mulching of exposed areas. During construction, all erosion controls must be inspected daily during the rainy season and weekly during the dry season to ensure they are working adequately. Excess sediments will be disposed of so they do not enter the stream channel.	Minimize sedimentation to fisheries resources.	Management Practice MODERATE (Past contract experience)	BMPs: R-14, W-9 Forest Plan S&G: RF-5 MOU Provision	Contract Specifications and Administrator

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Mitigation Measure or Project Design Feature	Objective	Effectiveness and Basis	Forest Plan Standard & Guideline	Enforcement
If weather conditions during project operations generate and transport sediment to the stream channel, operations will be ceased until weather conditions improve.	Minimize sedimentation to fisheries resources.	Management Practice MODERATE (Avoidance, past contracts)	BMP: R-3 Forest Plan S&G: RF-2	Contract Specifications and Administrator
All disturbed ground where runoff has the potential to drain into stream channels shall be re-vegetated or protected from surface erosion by seeding, mulching, or other methods prior to the fall rainy season. Retain measures to prevent sediment from reaching streams until the soil is secure. If appropriate, native species should be used in revegetation. Any seed used for revegetation shall be consistent with MBS guidelines.	Minimize effects to fisheries resources.	Management Practice MODERATE (Past contract experience)	Forest Plan S&G: RF-5 BMPs: R-9, VM-3 MOU Provision	Contract Specifications and Administrator
Wastewater from project activities and water removed from within the work area will be routed to an area landward of the bankfull elevation to allow removal of fine sediment and other contaminants prior to being discharged to the stream.	Minimize effects to fisheries resources.	Management Practice MODERATE-HIGH	BMP: R-9 MOU Provision	Contract Specifications and Administrator
When removing culverts, streambanks should be properly sloped to an angle of stability (natural repose), and be suitable for establishment of permanent woody vegetation. The streambed shall be restored to the original gradient.	Minimize effects to fisheries resources.	Management Practice MODERATE (MBS Forest roads, experience)	BMP: R-23 MOU Provision	Contract Specifications and Administrator
No supports, abutments, riprap, fill, armoring, or other foreign material shall be placed in bankfull channels.	Minimize effects to channel and fisheries resources.	Management Practice HIGH (Avoidance)	BMP: R-14 Forest Plan S&G: RF-2 MOU Provision	Contract Specifications and Administrator
Trees to be felled within 300 feet of Evans Creek shall be cabled into bundles of 3-5 logs and left in the riparian area away from campground to simulate larger down wood.	Minimize effects to riparian reserves.	Mitigation MODERATE (Past restoration work)	Forest Plan S&G: RA-2	Contract Specifications and Administrator
Leave all non-treated wood within the stream/wetland, including within the Riparian Reserve. Avoid use of treated wood for structures that may contact flowing water or that will be placed over water. Use of treated wood shall follow best management practices for treated wood in western aquatic environments (WWPI 2000).	Prevent and minimize effects to fisheries resources.	Management Practice HIGH (Logic, avoidance) WWPI 2000	MOU Provision	Contract Specifications and Administrator

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Mitigation Measure or Project Design Feature	Objective	Effectiveness and Basis	Forest Plan Standard & Guideline	Enforcement
Have hazardous spill clean-up materials on site. Have spill containment and control plan with notification procedures, specific clean up and disposal instructions for different products, and quick response containment and clean-up measures on site.	Prevent and minimize effects to water quality.	Management Practice MODERATE (Implementation of spill plans are an industry standard)	BMP: W-4 MOU Provision	Contract Specifications and Administrator
Any machinery maintenance involving potential contaminants (fuel, oil, hydraulic fluid, etc) will occur at an approved site 150 feet away from a stream channel, or outside the Riparian Reserve. Prior to starting work each day, check all machinery for leaks (fuel, oil, hydraulic fluid, etc.) and make all necessary repairs. All equipment operated instream must be cleaned before beginning operations below the bankfull elevation and remove all external grease, dirt, and mud. Stationary power equipment (generators and cranes) operated within 150 feet of any stream, water body or wetland must be diapered to prevent leaks.	Prevent and minimize effects to water quality.	Management Practice MODERATE (Implementation of spill plans are an industry standard)	BMPs: T-21, W-4 MOU Provision	Contract Specifications and Administrator
Fish passage structures will use streambed simulation or no-slope hydraulic design.	Minimize effects to fisheries resources.	Management Practice HIGH (FS R6 protocol)	Related to Forest Plan S&G: RF-6 MOU Provision	Engineering Design, Contract Specifications and Administrator
Large woody material removed from a culvert inlet will be put back in the stream channel downstream of the culvert unless doing so will cause degradation of habitat or put a drainage structure at risk.	Minimize disruption of woody debris transport to fisheries resources.	Management Practice MODERATE (Logic)	MOU Provision	Contract Specifications and Administrator
All projects potentially affecting the beds or banks of streams, lakes, or other water bodies shall meet all conditions specified in the WDFW HPA for the project. In-channel activities will be limited to non-spawning and incubation time periods, and will be completed during the WDFW in-water work period. Temporary stream crossings will be minimized, and avoided, where possible.	Minimize sedimentation to fisheries resources.	Management Practice HIGH (Avoidance)	BMPs: R-3, R-14 MOU Provision	Contract Specifications and Administrator; WDFW area habitat biologist
Bridges shall fully span the bankfull elevation of the stream channel, and allow 100-year flows and associated debris to pass.	Minimize effects to channels and fisheries resources.	Management Requirement HIGH (Logic)	Forest Plan S&G: RF-4 MOU Provision	Engineering Design, Contract Specifications and Administrator

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Mitigation Measure or Project Design Feature	Objective	Effectiveness and Basis	Forest Plan Standard & Guideline	Enforcement
Boulders, rock, woody materials and other natural construction materials used for the project must be obtained outside the riparian area.	Minimize effects to riparian areas.	Management Practice HIGH (Avoidance)	MOU Provision	Contract Specifications and Administrator
If blasting is needed, MBS Blasting Guidelines shall be followed to avoid potentially lethal distances and charge weights. When blasting using multiple holes per shot, a delay targeted at 50 milliseconds will be used between holes so effects to fish are similar to discrete blasts. Measures will be employed to prevent blasted materials from entering stream channels.	Minimize effects to fisheries resources.	Mitigation Measure MBS 2007; Wright and Hopsky 1998		Contract Specifications and Administrator; MBS Certified Blaster
Vegetation and Plants				
If any previously undiscovered threatened, endangered, or sensitive (TES) or other rare and uncommon vascular plants, bryophytes, lichens, or fungi are discovered, before or during project implementation, halt work until a USFS Botanist is consulted and necessary mitigation measures are enacted.	Prevent impact to TES or other rare and uncommon plants.	LRMP S&G HIGH (Logic)	Forest Plan S&Gs p. 4–127 (USDA FS 1990)	Contract Administrator
Treat known infestations <i>before</i> ground disturbance begins.	Eradicate known infestations.	BMP, LRMP S&G HIGH (USDA FS 2005a)	BMP (USDA FS 1999) Forest Plan S&Gs #16 (USDA FS 2005a)	USFS Botanist
For actions conducted or authorized by written permit by the Forest Service that will operate outside the limits of the road prism, require cleaning of all heavy equipment prior to <i>entering</i> NFS lands.	Prevent introduction of weeds into the MBSNF.	LRMP S&G MODERATE (USDA FS 2005a)	Forest Plan S&G #2 (USDA FS 2005a)	Contract Administrator
Suppliers must provide annual documentation to the sale administrator indicating that the following products have been examined by a qualified inspector and deemed free of State listed noxious weeds: Straw or other Mulch Gravel, rock or other fill Seeds (according to AOSA standards)	Prevent introduction of weeds.	BMP, LRMP S&G MODERATE (USDA FS 2005a)	Forest Plan S&G #3 & #7 (USDA FS 2005a), BMP (USDA FS 1999)	Contract Administrator
If weeds are present in the project area, all equipment and gear must be cleaned <i>before leaving the project area</i> to avoid spreading the infestation further.	Prevent weed spread.	BMP HIGH (USDA FS 1999)	BMP (USDA FS 1999)	Contract Administrator

Mitigation Measure or Project Design Feature	Objective	Effectiveness and Basis	Forest Plan Standard & Guideline	Enforcement
If weeds are present in the project area, work from relatively weed-free areas into the infested area rather than vise-versa.	Prevent weed spread.	BMP MODERATE (Logic)	BMP (USDA FS 1999)	Contract Administrator
Revegetate all areas of bare soil exposed by project activities if there is a risk of noxious weed invasion. Native plant materials are the first choice in revegetation where timely natural regeneration of the native plant community is not likely to occur. Follow revegetation criteria and specifications for this project (See Appendix F–Revegetation Criteria and Specifications).	Prevent erosion, prevent introduction and spread of weeds, maintain and restore habitat.	BMP, LRMP S&G HIGH (USDA FS 2005a)	Forest Plan S&G #13 (USDA FS 2005a), BMP (USDA FS 1999), ACS S&G #8 & #9 (USDA FS & USDI BLM 1994), Federal Register February 2, 2008 (USDA FS National Native Plant Policy)	Contract Administrator
Roads and Transportation				
Forest road new construction, reconstruction, and maintenance follows the design and construction methods for Forest Service roads.	Construction and maintenance criteria would follow the set guidelines.	Management Requirement HIGH (Logic)	FS Manuals & Handbooks	Contract Specifications and Administrator
Heritage				
Do not construct additional parking areas along the south side of Road 7920, directly across from the western entrance to the existing day-use area. If parking areas are to be constructed, avoid the entrance to the remaining segment of railroad grade by installing parking areas either to the west or to the east of this location. At the time of construction, block vehicular access to this piece of grade.	Protect historic railroad logging feature by avoidance measure.	Mitigation Measure HIGH (Experience)		FS Archaeologist or designate
While constructing the new campground access road, avoid earth disturbing activities along the north side of FSR 7920, directly across from the proposed road construction site.	Protect historic railroad logging feature by avoidance measure.	Mitigation Measure HIGH (Experience)		FS Archaeologist or designate
Continue regular scheduled road maintenance however, when operating around the entrances to the identified railroad grade and trestle, stay on the original disturbed road surfacing and do not inadvertently widen the road surface by either adding rock or blading the vegetated soils adjacent to the outer boundary of the current road surfacing.	Protect historic railroad logging feature by avoidance measure.	Mitigation Measure HIGH (Experience)		FS Archaeologist or designate

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Mitigation Measure or Project Design Feature	Objective	Effectiveness and Basis	Forest Plan Standard & Guideline	Enforcement
Prior to obliterating, decommissioning, or closing roads; converting roads to trails; converting trail to roads; or upgrading trails, complete on-the-ground cultural resource surveys.	Survey for and protect any previously unidentified historic or prehistoric properties.	LRMP S&G HIGH (Experience)	Forest Plan S&G #2 & #4 (p. 4–98)	FS Personnel prior to implementation
While constructing the new campground access road, performing regular road maintenance, reconstructing the existing day-use area, or building additional parking areas along FSR 7920; no excess rock and/or fill material is to be dumped or stored in the approaches to the existing railroad trestle.	Protect historic railroad logging feature by avoidance measure.	Mitigation Measure HIGH (Experience)		FS Archaeologist or designate
Inform a cultural resource technician when construction is to begin adjacent to the trestle location along FSR 7920. This is so activities can be periodically monitored for the duration of construction to ensure there is not encroachment on the trestle site.	Protect historic railroad logging feature by avoidance measure.	Mitigation Measure HIGH (Experience)		FS Archaeologist or designate
If any previous unknown cultural resources are located during implementation of the project, work will be immediately halted in the area. The Forest Archaeologist will be notified and the Forest will fulfill its responsibilities in accordance with the PA and other applicable regulations.	Identify and protect resources located as a result of project implementation that were previously unknown.	Mitigation Measure HIGH (Experience)		FS Archaeologist or designate
Recreation				
Campground, entrance and day-use area closure during reconstruction, to ensure public health and safety, will be scheduled during low use times such as shoulder seasons (April through May or October through November) and midweek. Signs along SR 165 and FSR 7800 will be posted to notify the public of the pending closure periods.	Health and safety of users.	Mitigation Measure MODERATE (Experience and professional judgment)		Contractor or Forest Staff
Temporary trail closures for public safety during reconstruction and/or repair will occur during mid-week.	Health and safety of users.	Mitigation Measure MODERATE (Experience and professional judgment)		Contractor or Forest Staff

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Mitigation Measure or Project Design Feature	Objective	Effectiveness and Basis	Forest Plan Standard & Guideline	Enforcement
Only one trail at a time will be closed for reconstruction to accommodate user demands and minimize impacts to other trails. Signs will be posted at trailheads to notify users prior to and during closure.	Health and safety of users.	Mitigation Measure MODERATE (Experience and Professional judgment)		Contractor or Forest Staff
Access to the Evans Creek ORV area from either FSR 7920 or Trail #105 will be permanently closed to provide for only one point of entry.	As directed in the 1980 Environmental Assessment approved by the Forest Supervisor	Management Requirement MODERATE (Experience and professional judgment)	USDA 1980 EA–Evans Creek ORV Area	Forest Staff
Soils				
Plan and conduct land management activities so that reductions of soil productivity potentially caused by detrimental compaction, displacement, puddling, and severe burning are minimized. Nutrient capital on forest and rangelands is to be maintained at acceptable levels as determined by state of the art technology.	Maintain soil productivity and minimize soil displacement and sedimentation.	Management Requirement HIGH (Logic)	Forest Plan S&G (p. 4–117)	FS Staff
Plan and conduct land management activities so that soil loss from surface erosion and mass wasting, caused by these activities, will not result in an unacceptable reduction in soil productivity and water quality.	Maintain soil productivity and minimize soil displacement and sedimentation.	Management Requirement HIGH (Logic)	Forest Plan S&G (p. 4–117), FSM 2500, R6 Supplement No. 2500.98–1	FS Staff
No more than 20% of an activity area may be severely burned, compacted, puddle, or displaced as a result of the activity. Only permanent features of the transportation system will remain in a detrimentally compacted, puddle, and/or displaced condition.	Maintain soil productivity and minimize soil displacement and sedimentation.	Management Requirement HIGH (Logic)	Forest Plan S&G (p. 4–117)	FS Staff
Surface erosion will be minimized by maintaining effective ground cover after cessation of any soil disturbing activity.	Minimize surface erosion.	Management Requirement HIGH (Logic and experience)	Forest Plan S&G (p. 4–117)	Contract Administrator and FS Staff
Plan and accomplish rehabilitation projects as necessary to meet soil and water objectives and standards.	Maintain soil productivity and water quality	Management Requirement HIGH (Logic)	Forest Plan S&G (p. 4–117)	Contract Administrator and FS Staff

Mitigation Measure or Project Design Feature	Objective	Effectiveness and Basis	Forest Plan Standard & Guideline	Enforcement
Ground-based vehicles will not operate where soil water content is high enough to cause rutting that exceeds 6 inches in depth for a length of ten feet or more.	Limit the degree of soil compaction, rutting, and puddling as well as reduce the potential for offsite stream sedimentation.	Mitigation Measure MODERATE (Experience)	Forest Plan S&G p. 4-117 (USDA FS 1990)	Contract Administrator
As currently written, the seasonal closure order (36 CFR 261.55b, c) meets the intent of protecting the soils resource from the potential erosion influenced by precipitation in particularly rainy months. Unless the proposed action would replace this order with a similar one, this order would remain, still limiting ground disturbance during rainy periods.	Limit the degree of soil compaction, rutting, and puddling as well as reduce the potential for offsite stream sedimentation.	Mitigation Measure HIGH (Experience or personal judgment)	Forest Plan S&G p. 4-117 (USDA FS 1990)	Contract Administrator
Subsoiled trails and roads would be seeded with local native grasses, if available, and covered with mulch. Acceptable grass seed mix and type of mulch would be specified by the district botanist in collaboration with the district aquatic specialist. Subsequent vehicular access to these areas would be prevented. Closure to vehicles is required to prevent these areas from being re-compacted and to allow vegetation to develop.	To rehabilitate compacted soils, accelerate recovery of compacted soils, facilitate water infiltration and aid establishing vegetation on those disturbed areas.	Mitigation Measure HIGH (Logic and past experience)	Forest Plan S&G p. 4-117 (USDA FS 1990)	Contract Administrator and FS Staff
Repair or restoration of trails in existing flood plains would be designed to allow water to pass over or through the trail during flood events.	Allow the timing, variability and duration of flood plain inundation and water table elevation to be maintained or restored.	Mitigation Measure HIGH (Logic and past experience)	Forest Plan S&G p. 4-117 (USDA FS 1990)	Contract Administrator and FS Staff
Wildlife				

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Mitigation Measure or Project Design Feature	Objective	Effectiveness and Basis	Forest Plan Standard & Guideline	Enforcement
Implement road and trail improvements and decommissioning prior to implementing facility (campground and parking areas) expansion and improvements in conjunction with meeting the resource objective of other resources such as fish, soils, hydrology.	Prioritizing restoration activities to promote a beneficial or neutral effect within an LSR or LS/OG allocation area. (example: Facility expansion that includes restoration of riparian reserve, would be deemed to be neutral or beneficial).	Management Requirement HIGH (Logic and past experience)	Successional Reserve S&G: App. B7 p. 1 (NWFP)	FS Staff and Monitoring
Establish a winter-through-spring seasonal closure to help protect and enhance biological needs of winter-stressed wildlife and to improve parturition success. Prey species for spotted owls, for example, are non-hibernators, may be arboreal or ground-dwelling species that form underground snow tunnel trails. Motorized vehicle use in old-growth habitat may disturb the owls as well as causing direct or indirect disturbance to prey species. Proposed closure dates Dec. 15 through March 31.	Minimize or avoid incidental take of federally protected threatened and endangered species.	Management Requirement HIGH (Logic and past experience)	Forest Plan S&G p. 4-127 (USDA FS 1990)	Recreation Manager, Terrestrial (wildlife, botany), Aquatics (fish, hydro, soils), or delegate to LEO and Monitoring

Appendix B: Monitoring Plan Summary Sheets**Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest Monitoring Summary Form**

District: Snoqualmie Ranger District
Project Name: Evans Creek ORV Area Management Plan
Monitoring Objective: Heritage Resource Protection
Monitoring Type: Pre-Inspection or On-Site Monitoring
Priority: High
Parameter: Implementation of any ground disturbing activities would require notification of certified Cultural Resource Technician or Forest Archaeologist to determine scope and need for pre-inspection or monitoring.
Methodology: Following processes outlined in the Forest Plan S&G, 1997 Programmatic Agreement, and the MBSNF Cultural Resource Inventory Strategy.
Frequency/Duration: As needed to fulfill the requirements of Section 106.
Data Storage: Digital and/or hardcopy storage of reports documenting findings.
Report: Cultural Resource Report and Evaluation
Projected Costs: Dependant on number of activities and scope.

Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest Monitoring Summary Form

District: Snoqualmie Ranger District
Project Name: Evans Creek ORV Area Management Plan
Monitoring Objective: Soil Erosion Conditions
Monitoring Type: Conditional
Priority: High
Parameter: Erosion would be monitored after heavy rainfall to identify the need for individual trail closures during the Fall and Spring precipitation events.
Methodology: Collect information based on fields in the Trail Condition Assessment (TCA), modified from Meyer 2002, on trails needing resource protection and recording information on the data forms. Submit data forms to the Aquatics specialist for review and subsequent recommendation for management actions.
Frequency/Duration: After each precipitation event that warrants monitoring of soil conditions.
Data Storage: Hardcopy and/or digital reports.
Report: Trail Condition Assessment data forms and Recommendation for Management Action.
Projected Costs: Varies dependant on number and severity of precipitation events.

Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest Monitoring Summary Form

District: Snoqualmie Ranger District
Project Name: Evans Creek ORV Area Management Plan
Monitoring Objective: Area Closure Compliance
Monitoring Type: Education and Enforcement
Priority: High
Parameter: Monitor closure area for non-compliance during closure period of December 15 – March 31 annually.
Methodology: Site visits should be conducted on a weekend (using aircraft if funding is available). Post, and repost when necessary, signage; issue citations for non-compliance with closure.
Frequency/Duration: Annually during the life of plan
Data Storage: Hardcopy and/or digital format
Report: Compliance statistics and number of contacts/citations issued.
Projected Costs: Varied dependant on method of transportation used to access project area and number of visits made.

Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest Monitoring Summary Form

District: Snoqualmie Ranger District
Project Name: Evans Creek ORV Area Management Plan
Monitoring Objective: Establish Plots for Wildlife Concerns
Monitoring Type: Implementation Monitoring
Priority: High
Parameter: Following plan approval, conduct inventory of old-growth areas, special habitat sites (e.g. talus) and other old-growth “legacy elements” bisected by ORV trails.
<p>Methodology: A complete walk-through survey of each old-growth patch that is bisected or lies adjacent to a designated trail should be mapped for habitat enhancement and restoration where off-trail riding/driving is a problem. These sites should also be monitored to reinforce compliance and education to protect old-growth habitat.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish line transects and plot locations to inventory plant forms (i.e. forb, herb, grass, shrub, tree), plant density, and dimensions of snags and down wood. • Establish GPS photo points to document ground surface topography and site condition of problem areas. • Establish GPS photo points in each problem area showing approximate percent cover habitat type of residual plants. • Specific monitoring protocols will be developed for the problem sites. • Monitor problem sites for non-compliance. • Monitor and inspect signage, barricades, used to educate and discourage off-trail riding within old-growth patches.
Frequency/Duration: Annually for life of plan
Data Storage: Hardcopy and/or digital format
Report: An annual report on monitoring results will be submitted to the District Ranger by the end of each Calendar year.
Projected Costs: The monitoring plan, once approved, shall be funded and implemented as part of the annual ORV area operations. Cost dependant on the number of plots and photo points required to meet the intent of monitoring.

Appendix C: Public Comment and Responses from 30-Day Comment

Christopher Moore

Comment #1: In regards to the ORV park closure, as an ORV user, would prefer the park remain open year round. If that is not possible, would like to recommend consideration of allowing the District Ranger the authority to open designated trails to all ORV users during the winter months as weather and conditions allow. Although most trails are not generally accessible from late December through March, there are some trails which are often passable and attractive to ORV users. Particularly the 311, 311a, 198, and 197 trails, as well as the return roads to the campgrounds. Would like to suggest that those trails be allowed to remain open during the winter months. Allowing some access during the winter months will allow user groups opportunity for winter recreation as well as maintain facilities that might otherwise be damaged by neglect and heavy snowfall.

Forest Service Response: The current closure order restricted use (on the trails mentioned above) from November 10 through July 15 to ensure user safety and protect resources. The closure approved in the Selected Alternative adopts a December 15 through March 31 closure timeframe for the protection of wildlife and other resources. This closure allows for a period of time, when use is already low, for wildlife to utilize the area either directly or indirectly without conflict or disturbance from motorized use. Other resources, such as soil and water, will also benefit from this annual closure. (EA pp. 14, 45, 55-57, 110-112, 123 and this Decision Notice – Appendix A Soils and Wildlife)

General Statement: Supports the development of loop-based trails as extremely valuable, particularly if those designated trails could be one way directional. During periods of high attendance, opposing traffic on narrow or difficult trails can cause backups and delays, such that some user built bypasses are innovated. By designating traffic direction on more challenging or narrow trails, fewer delays and innovated bypasses may occur.

John Thompson

Comment #1: Would like to see FSR 7920 closed to access from FSR 7800 (Carbon River Road) to its junction with Trail 199. Wish is to eliminate any use of Trail 120.

Forest Service Response: The Selected Alternative does close FSR 7290 from MP 7.1 (proximity of Trail 199) to its end at the junction with FSR 7800 (Carbon River Road), which in turn would result in the decommissioning of FSR 7920-610 and Trail 120 (EA pp. 41-42 and 44). This action would eliminate an unauthorized access point into the Evans Creek ORV Area via FSR 7920 from FSR 7800 (as identified in the 1980 Evans Creek ORV Area EA).

General Statement: Strongly supports Alternative 2.

Puyallup Tribe of Indians (Brandon Reynon, Tribal Archaeologist/Cultural Regulatory Specialist)

Comment #1: The project location is in very close proximity to several areas that have potential for possible archaeological discoveries. At this time, please recognize that historic sites may be

exposed when such projects are undertaken. We recommend that you hire an archaeologist to oversee and evaluate the proposed location of your project and complete a cultural resource report. Any exposure of historical sites will need to be reported to my office immediately.

Forest Service Response: The Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest has a Forest Archaeologist located at our Supervisor's Office in Everett, Washington who among other things is responsible for overseeing the Forest Heritage Program. Cultural surveys were conducted, documented and submitted to the Forest Archaeologist for review and evaluation (EA p. 90 and Project Record). Findings have been documented in accordance with the Programmatic Agreement between the Forest Service and Washington SHPO.

General Statement: The subject property is located within the Usual and Accustomed (U&A) area of our people. The term "Usual and Accustomed Areas" comes from the treaties that the tribes in this area signed with the federal government. Tribes reserved the right to hunt, fish and gather in our "usual and accustomed grounds and stations". These U&A areas have been adjudicated by the federal courts. As with all of these areas they are significant areas to our Tribe.

Pacific Northwest 4-Wheel-Drive Association (Arlene Brooks, Washington State Director

Comment #1: As part of the consultation and coordination process; during the group, individual and public involvement – there was a request for consideration during the winter season for "managed over the snow" opportunities for the four-wheel drive community; suggestion - #102 (4X4 trail system), we would like to have this request considered again.

Forest Service Response: The current closure order restricted use (on the dual-track trails) from November 10 through July 15 to ensure user safety and protect resources. The closure approved in the Selected Alternative adopts a December 15 through March 31 closure timeframe for the protection of wildlife and other resources. This closure allows for a period of time, when use is already low, for wildlife to utilize the area either directly or indirectly without conflict or disturbance from motorized use. Other resources, such as soil and water, will also benefit from this annual closure. (EA pp. 14, 45, 55-57, 110-112, 123 and this Decision Notice – Appendix A Soils and Wildlife)

Letter makes reference to Trail 102 consideration, for the purpose of this response, it is assumed that Trail 120 is the actual concern as no changes outside of trail management were proposed in the Selected Action for Trail 102. Trail 120 is beyond Forest Road 7920 proposed closure at its junction with Trail 199 in the Selected Alternative. Access to Trail 120 will be eliminated in the Selected Alternative (EA pp. 11, 44, 55, 58, 65, 102).

General Statements:

- Concurs with the Districts decision and reasoning for dropping from further consideration: 1) Closure of the ORV Area, and 2) Leave Everything Open.
- Alternative 1 – No action is not acceptable as it would fall under the current 1980 Forest Plan. Conditions at Evans Creek need to improve to address serious safety, health and

resource issues; due to the facilities location and the user demand – and is vital to the recreation community.

- Alternative 2 – The Proposed Plan – is being supported. It is realistic in facility design and its implementation; however it comes with some reservation, recommendations and need for clarification. We welcome the proposed revision to the operation season closure order #06-05-FO-06-01 that was imposed by the Forest Supervisor in 2006. We also understand the Districts concern on having flexible temporary trail closures due to severe seasonal weather contributing to habitat and resource concerns; although in reviewing the Plan (Wildlife) based on the landscape, I see where there is an assumption species are scarce or no longer persist in the planning area due to habitat loss.

Carl and Dinni Fabiani

Comment #1: Adamantly oppose the closure or conversion of any portion of FSR 7920 and oppose conversion of portions of FSR 7930 to trails. Public land managers have for years been closing more roads to the public. Our understanding is that FS roads were constructed with public funds for the purpose of managing these lands and of providing public access for recreational activities. The population of western Washington is growing rapidly. Private forestlands that were once open have been largely closed or may be accessed with rather expensive permits. Access to public lands is becoming more difficult through the closure of roads, trails and other facilities such as campgrounds, picnic areas, etc. With a growing population and a complementary growing demand for access to outdoor recreation opportunities, land managers should be increasing access to public lands rather than restricting access through road closures. Do not close or restrict these original forest roads (7920 and 7930). Keep them available for general public use.

Forest Service Response: Forest Service roads were constructed in a number of ways for a variety of reasons. Most roads in this area were constructed on top of old railroad logging grades used to access timber for harvest from the area, others were constructed to further the removal of timber and management of those areas during the timber regeneration process (planting, thinning, etc). These roads served a secondary purpose in allowing the recreating public vehicular access to otherwise inaccessible areas. Money for construction and maintenance of these roads came largely from the income generated from timber sales. Currently the annual maintenance funding for the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest is inadequate to maintain the existing forest road system. This situation is not expected to improve. In the Forest-wide Roads Analysis, many of the roads in this area were identified for closure. The other factors contributing to the proposed changes are user safety and area access. As a result, the Selected Alternative calls for a variety of treatments to both FSR 7920 and 7930 that will change access to high-clearance vehicles or close portions of these roads. With the exception of the road closures, access to FSR 7920 and 7930 by high-clearance vehicles will still be permitted (EA pp. 7-9, 11, 41-42, 55, 58, 73-79, 101-102 and Decision Notice – Appendix A Recreation).

General Comment: The Evans Creek ORV area has become a hugely popular public use area in the years since its creation. In recent years, the level of use has, especially in winter months,

increased to a point that it frequently spills onto WA State Route 165. We applaud the plan to improve facilities at Evans Creek including improving the entrance area, the campground and the maintenance of the roads and trails

Appendix D: Evans Creek ORV Area Management Plan Selected Alternative Map

Figure 1 – Alternative 2 Selected Alternative Map

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