
File Code: 1950
Date: September 18, 2020

Dear Interested Party:

Thank you for your interest and engagement in the Wynoochee Restoration and Road Management Project. My team and I have prepared a draft Decision Notice/Finding of No Significant Impact (DN) and final Environmental Assessment (EA) for public review and, for those who submitted previous written comments, an opportunity to object to this draft decision, before I make a final decision.

During the public comment period in March, we received many comments which I considered and responded to in the draft DN and final EA. While we were unable to hold a public field trip due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I believe the comments I received represented the range of public concerns and project support that would have been discussed in the field. I hope that the photos in the EA also helped illustrate the main points.

This project continues the Forest Service's commitment to forest management and supporting local communities. The draft decision represents my intentions of meeting project goals of developing late successional and old-growth forest habitat, improving water quality, and managing the road system in a way that balances existing and expected needs with funding levels. The array of project activities includes: thinning which also provides wood product, terrestrial and aquatic habitat improvement projects, and removing diseased trees in the Coho campground. In addition, the project manages the Forest road system by repairing and maintaining some roads for long term use, decommissioning some roads, and placing other roads into closed/stored status to remain available for future needs.

Road access and impacts from the inability to adequately maintain the current road system were key topics of concern among commenters, and the interdisciplinary project team and I had many long discussions about options and trade-offs. For every road segment, discussions included current and anticipated uses and needs, risk to fish and aquatic habitat, and cost of maintenance and to what level. I acknowledge that there are key road segments that provide desired access, but are also locations that are very difficult or expensive to maintain. The draft DN indicates my preference for Alternative B with some modifications from Alternative C to accommodate access on specific roads. The draft DN explains how I considered the public comments and environmental analysis to come to my preliminary decision.

The final EA was updated to include written responses to comments received as well as other minor corrections and updates, but largely remains unchanged. The documents are available at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=53124> under the 'Decision' tab.

Next Steps

This proposed decision is subject to objection pursuant to 36 CFR 218, Subparts A and B. The objection process provides the opportunity to re-raise previous comments or concerns before a final decision is



made. A meeting may be offered between objectors, the Forest Supervisor (Objection Reviewing Officer), and the District Ranger (Deciding Official) in order to discuss and potentially resolve objections. Objections will only be accepted from individuals or organizations that submitted project specific written comments during a designated opportunity for public participation (scoping or 30-day public comment period). Issues raised in objections must be based on previously submitted comments unless based on new information arising after the designated comment period.

Objections must be submitted within 45 days following the publication of a legal notice in The Peninsula Daily News Port Angeles, Washington (expected Sept. 23, 2020). The date of this legal notice is the exclusive means for calculating the time to file an objection. Those wishing to object should not rely upon dates or timeframes provided by any other source. It is the objector's responsibility to ensure evidence of timely receipt (36 CFR 218.9).

Objections must be submitted to the reviewing officer: Forest Supervisor, Kelly Lawrence, 1835 Black Lake Blvd. SW, Olympia, WA 98512. Please put "OBJECTION - Wynoochee Restoration and Road Management Project" in the subject line. Objections may be submitted via mail, FAX (360-956-2330), or delivered to the same address during business hours. The Olympia Office is currently open from 10-2 Monday, Thursday and Friday.

Electronic objections, in common formats (.doc, .pdf, .rtf, .txt), are preferred, and may be submitted via the project website listed above. On the project website (listed above) within the "Get Connected" group to the right click on "Comment/Object on Project" and follow on-screen instructions for submission. Objections must include (36 CFR 218.8(d)): 1) name, address and telephone; 2) signature or other verification of authorship; 3) identify a single lead objector when applicable; 4) project name, Responsible Official name and title, and name of affected National Forest and/or Ranger District; 5) reasons for, and suggested remedies to resolve the objections; and, 6) description of the connection between the objections and prior comments. Incorporate documents by reference only as provided for at 36 CFR 218.8(b). Objections will become part of the public record, and comments, including names and addresses may be released for public inspection.

Thank you for your continued interest in the Wynoochee Restoration and Road Management Project. For additional information, contact Kim Crider, Project Lead, Olympic National Forest Supervisor's Office, 1835 Black Lake Blvd. SW, Olympia, WA 98512, 360-956-2376 or kimberly.crider@usda.gov.

Sincerely,


YEWAH LAU
District Ranger