



File Code: 1950-1

Date: October 5, 2010

Dear Interested Citizen,

The Mt. Hood National Forest is now preparing an Environmental Assessment to improve hydrologic function and reduce adverse impacts to aquatic habitat by proposing to decommission approximately 200 miles of little used roads on the Barlow and Hood River Ranger Districts<sup>1</sup>. Road decommissioning efforts would occur in the White River watershed and Tygh Creek subwatershed<sup>2</sup>. Of the 200 miles of roads being proposed for decommissioning, about 35 miles would *not* be decommissioned until the Bear Springs Thinning project has been implemented. Several roads are also proposed to be converted to a non-motorized recreation trail; and one road would be converted to a snowmobile trail. Additionally, about 35 miles of road are proposed to be closed to public use, but these roads would remain on the Forest's transportation system for administrative use. Once the project has been completed, about 355 miles of road would remain in the project area.

The purpose for this proposal is as follows:

- Reduce impacts to water quality and aquatic habitats associated with little used roads.
- Reduce road density to improve terrestrial habitat quality.
- Reduce the spread of non-native invasive plants associated with little used roads.
- Reduce road maintenance costs.

There is a need for action because:

- There are miles of roads on the Forest that have not been maintained or repaired. Many roads are no longer drivable due to brush encroachment. Routine inspection of culverts and ditches on these roads is not always possible because of lack of access, personnel, and funding. If roads are not maintained or decommissioned in the near future, there is an increased risk for surface erosion, gulying, and landslides. Such potential risks may result in increased sediment delivery to streams and reservoirs, thereby affecting water quality and aquatic habitat.
- High open road densities are associated with habitat fragmentation and wildlife harassment. Decommissioning roads could allow for wildlife species to utilize more contiguous habitats and promote healthier wildlife populations.

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<sup>1</sup> Currently, there are about 600 miles of roads in the project area. This proposed action would decommission about a third of these roads.

<sup>2</sup> For maps of the project area, please refer to the Forest website at: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/mthood/projects/>. If you would like a hardcopy of these maps, please contact Michelle Lombardo, Project IDT Leader, at (503) 668-1796 or [mlombardo@fs.fed.us](mailto:mlombardo@fs.fed.us).



- Roads serve as potential conduits for non-native invasive plants. Managing the spread of invasive species is important for maintaining healthy native ecosystems. If certain roads are not decommissioned, there is the continued threat for invasive plants to spread and displace native plants.

The Mt. Hood National Forest is now seeking comments from individuals, organizations, local and state governments, and other federal agencies that may be interested in or affected by the proposed action. Comments may pertain to the nature and scope of the environmental, social, and economic issues, and possible alternatives to the proposed action. Your comments will help us assess the proposed action, develop alternatives and prepare an Environmental Assessment.

The Forest Service would like your scoping comments by November 17, 2010. Please send your written comments to: Michelle Lombardo, Mt. Hood National Forest, 16400 Champion Way, Sandy, Oregon 97055; FAX: (503) 668-1413. You may also hand-deliver your comments to the above address during normal business hours which are 8:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, excluding federal holidays. Electronic comments may be submitted to **comments-pacificnorthwest-mthood@fs.fed.us** in a format such as an e-mail message, plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), or Word (.doc). All those who comment will remain on our mailing list and receive future updates on this proposal.

Based on the level of interest from the public, we would also like to invite individuals and organizations to attend a site visit tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, November 3<sup>rd</sup>. If you are interested in participating in this field trip, then please contact Michelle Lombardo, Project IDT Leader, at (503) 668-1796 or mlombardo@fs.fed.us by October 26, 2010. Please indicate which roads you are interested in seeing in the field as well as what your potential concerns are. We will contact those of you who have expressed interest in participating in the site visit with specific details about the time and location to meet.

Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record for this project, available for public inspection, and released if requested under the Freedom of Information Act.

Electronic maps and other information about the project are available on the Internet at: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/mthood/projects/>. If you have any questions concerning this proposal, please contact Michelle Lombardo, Project IDT Leader, at (503) 668-1796 or mlombardo@fs.fed.us.

Sincerely,

*/s/ Michael J. Hernandez*

MICHAEL J. HERNANDEZ  
District Ranger

*/s/ Daina L. Bambe*

DAINA L. BAMBE  
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