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Change the plan to reduce impacts of off-road machines on Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest wild areas, wildlife habitat, and quiet trails

Dear Officials,

I am writing to urge you to change the plan to reduce impacts of off-road machines on wild areas, wildlife habitat, and quiet trails.

The proposal keeps open all 1,000 miles of trails currently open to Off-Road Vehicles (ORVs). This would continue the impacts on wildlife, damage to trails, and soil erosion and impacts to water quality. The noise and fumes from these machines degrade the experience of hikers, equestrians and mountain bicyclists.

Instead, motorized use should not be allowed in the following pristine areas that were never reviewed for ORV impacts on the environment:

oLake Chelan-Sawtooth Ridge (south of the Wilderness), including Foggy Dew Creek, Crater Creek, Boiling Lake and Safety Harbor Creek

oMad River/Entiat (adjacent to Glacier Peak Wilderness), including Myrtle Lake, Two Little Lake and Mad Lake

oTeanaway (adjacent to Alpine Lakes Wilderness), including West and Middle Forks; DeRoux Creek, and Stafford/Bear Creek

oAdditional roadless areas: West Manastash Ridge/Blowout Mtn, Nason Ridge, and Devils Gulch

While the Forest Service suggests it will have individual districts within the national forest look at these areas in the future, the reality is this is a permanent decision. The Forest Service took a decade to get to this point, and has have been unwilling to change the status quo. This just legitimizes the ORV use on trails where it should never have been allowed.

?Prohibit cross country motorized use

A national rule has been in place for ten years that requires motorized travel to be on designated routes only, and eliminates driving dirt-bikes, ATVs and jeeps across meadows, forests, sagebrush, creeks, and wetlands. It's time to implement it here in the Cascades.

?Limit Off-road Camping

The draft proposal would allow driving as far as 300' from a road in order to camp. Called "dispersed camping", this means that trucks, jeeps, vans and trailers can just drive off a road and find a place to set up a camp, wherever they want. Ironically, this is in areas that the national rule just put off limits to cross country ORV riding. Up to 5,000 miles of roads will be open to this type of unmanaged cross-country vehicle driving. I ask that dispersed camping be carefully evaluated and allowed only in specifically designated areas at least 200' from any streams or lakes.

?Limit WATVs

The Forest Service is proposing 350 miles of roads to be open to a type of ORV called WATVs. This would link trailheads and put pressure for more trails to be open to motorized use. WATV riders want even more, including roads that were closed to protect watershed and wildlife values. I ask you to withdraw this WATV proposal and to defer this decision until you have evaluated the trails that would be affected by all types of ORV use.

?Protect key wildlife areas from Snowmobiles

This plan does not address snowmobile use, which impacts cross country skiing, snowshoeing areas, and critical winter habitat for wildlife. The EIS should consider this part of the motorized use of the national forest.

?Do a full EIS with alternatives for motorized trails

The Forest Service is making a major decision on motorized trail use without writing an Environmental Impact Statement. You are considering no alternatives to the status quo regarding motorized dirt bikes on trails. I ask the Forest Service to consider alternatives that recreate non-motorized, roadless areas in the National Forest, such as Teanaway, Mad River, Lake Chelan- Sawtooth, and Devils Gulch roadless areas. I oppose all alternatives in the EA, since they did not consider alternatives to the current ORV trail system.

Sincerely,
Jonathan Boyne
Seattle