



Dosewallips Road Reconstruction Proposal:

**Cutting Old Growth Trees,
Destroying Critical Wildlife Habitat -
for Motorized Vehicles?**

Save the Dosewallips - Your Letters Needed Now!

The Olympic National Forest proposes to build a road through old-growth forests and critical habitat for spotted owls and marbled murrelets, and to potentially harm listed salmon species in the Dosewallips Watershed.

Background: During a storm in January 2002, approximately 310 feet of the Dosewallips road washed out near milepost 10, just over five miles shy of its terminus in the Olympic National Park. The washout size had increased to

slightly more than 500 feet as measured in December 2007. Each new washout brings the slide closer to the Buckhorn Wilderness.



photo by Connie Gallant

Six and a half years later, the Olympic National Forest (ONF) and Federal Highway Administration have released a draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) for reconstruction of Forest Service Road (FSR) 2610 along the Dosewallips River.

During the scoping process for this project, a large number of organizations, individuals, tribal councils and agencies asked for an alternative that would look at decommissioning the road and turning it into a trail for families and day-hikers. This trail would lead into the Olympic National Park for those who wished to do backpacking and more rigorous hiking and climbing. Unfortunately, the Forest Service paid no attention to its stakeholders and instead bullheadedly refused to consider such an alternative.

OFCO and Olympic Park Associates - hopefully with additional allies - plan to challenge this most foolish and environmentally destructive plan. In order to show the Olympic National Forest that we are on the right side of what the public wants, your letters, which can be in the form of e-mails, are absolutely essential.

Please feel free to use one or more of the following as talking points in your letter:

- The agencies' objectionable "purpose and need" for the DEIS has been artificially narrowed to restoring motor vehicle use on the final five miles of dead-end road, despite repeated public requests to convert this section to a multi-season, non-motorized trail. Conversion to trail is the lone ecologically responsible option. The scenery here is rich and varied, and not readily appreciated from a moving vehicle. Please tell

the Forest Service you want the road to be decommissioned and turned into a trail.

- The DEIS studies three action alternatives, though fails to identify a preferred alternative. This means that members of the public must comment on all of these alternatives. The alternatives include two variations of road reconstruction above the washout along a steep, wet, and unstable slope (costing \$2.55 million and \$3.76 million, respectively), as well as a lengthy bridge option (\$8.75 million and considered an unlikely choice). All would severely mar the natural landscape here. These upslope alternatives would slice through some of the finest lowland old-growth forest remaining on the eastern Olympic Peninsula.
- The upslope alternatives would be located only one-quarter mile (the DEIS erroneously states three-quarters of a mile) below the southern boundary of the Buckhorn Wilderness Area in contiguous wild forest. Cut banks 60-to-80-feet high for the new road grade, rivaling the height of the washout itself, would further destabilize the steep slope and risk the integrity of the Buckhorn Wilderness immediately above. As noted earlier, the slope continues to fail. Predictions of more severe and frequent storms as the climate changes make it clear that even if the road were built, it would probably have a very short lifespan.
- Fish and wildlife threatened. Road reconstruction here would destroy designated critical habitat for the threatened northern spotted owl and marbled murrelet. The Dosewallips River itself is critical habitat for threatened Puget Sound chinook salmon. Listed steelhead are also present. Coho and coastal cutthroat spawn in small, vulnerable tributaries in the project area.
- The Forest Service concedes that all three action alternatives would violate the standards and guidelines of the Northwest Forest Plan, specifically with regard to Late Successional Reserve and Riparian Reserve protections. Nevertheless, the agencies have proposed up to five amendments to the Plan in order to push the project through, all of which they've unilaterally declared (with no prior public input) to be "non-significant."



photo by Nancy Woolley

In forming your comments, please emphasize that this DEIS is so riddled with illogic, legal holes, and lack of responsiveness to the general public that it simply doesn't pass the smell test. It should be withdrawn in its entirety, replaced by a genuinely comprehensive study that weighs sensible access options respectful of the remarkable natural features found here. Your letters do not need to be lengthy, but it helps greatly to speak from the heart.

The DEIS is available on the Olympic National Forest Web site at: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/olympic/projects-nu/index.shtml>. If you would like an electronic copy of the DEIS on a CD-ROM or a paper copy, please contact:

Tim Davis at 1835 Black Lake Blvd SW, Suite A, Olympia, Washington, 98512, or phone 360-956-2375.

Comments are due by **August 12**. Mail to Tim Davis at the Olympic National Forest headquarters address above, or by e-mail to:

comments-pacificnorthwest-olympic@fs.fed.us

For additional information, contact Jim Scarborough of the Olympic Forest Coalition at 360-738-2289 or jim@olympicforest.org. Further background information, including photos of the road, may be found at:

<http://olympicforest.org/gallery-1.htm>.

Many thanks for helping to save our Forest's natural treasures.
