



File Code: 1950

Date: August 2, 2012

Dear National Forest User,

The Snoqualmie Ranger District of the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest has initiated National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) environmental analysis for the *Denny Creek and Franklin Falls Trail and Parking Improvements project*. This project is located southwest of Exit 52 off Interstate 90, within T. 22 N., R. 11 E. Sec. 8, NW ¼ and Sec. 5, NW ¼ and SW ¼. W.M. (see enclosed location map).

The parking lots at the Denny Creek and Franklin Falls trailheads are overcrowded and inaccessible to large vehicles, emergency services, and Forest Service managers. Inappropriate parking along the 5830 road is damaging the road shoulder and adjacent stream. The Franklin Falls trail is flood-prone and frequently washes out. It currently has no overlooks, often leading to back-ups and erosion as hikers stop or climb off-trail to take in views. The trail is not accessible to families with young children or people with disabilities.

The Snoqualmie Ranger District wants to improve the accessibility and enjoyment of the trailheads and trails at Denny Creek and Franklin Falls. The District proposes a variety of changes to this area, including:

1. Expand parking to approximately 110 spaces, including re-establishing a former road and installing ADA and larger vehicle parking accommodations
2. Install walkways, toilets, and interpretive signs at the trailheads and parking areas
3. Gate the 5830 road at the bridge over the South Fork Snoqualmie River (cabin owners will have keys to permit access behind this gate)ⁱ
4. Gate the access road to the cabins on the east side of the river (cabin owners will have keys to permit access behind this gate)
5. Close the existing parking area at the Denny Creek trailhead and install additional picnic tables and vegetation
6. Reconstruct portions of the Franklin Falls trail and relocate it out of the floodplain
7. Install handrails and overlooks with benches, as well as retaining walls and steps to provide safe access to the gravel bar and plunge pool below Franklin Falls
8. Create two new trails connecting to the Denny Creek Campground and to the Old Wagon Road trail
9. Install some vegetation between Denny Creek Campground and the 5830 road to visually screen campsites from the new parking areas

Please see the attached site plan map for a depiction of the above actions.

This letter continues the public involvement part of the NEPA process, which we initiated with a public meeting on June 20th and with a letter dated July 2, 2012. The Snoqualmie Ranger District is seeking your comments on the *Denny Creek and Franklin Falls Trail and Parking Improvements project*. Issues identified during the scoping and public involvement process will be used in analyzing the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of the proposed action.



Comments received, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be part of the Project Record and available for public review.

Comments will be accepted for 30 days following publication of a legal notice in the *Snoqualmie Valley Record* (expected publication date is 8/8/12). If the scoping and comment time period expires on a Saturday, Sunday, or Federal holiday, comments are due by the end of the next Federal working day. Only those who submit timely comments will be accepted as appellants. The publication date in the newspaper of record is the exclusive means for calculating the comment period.

Comments on this project may be submitted orally, by telephone, electronically, through the mail, by fax, or hand-delivered. Electronic comments may be sent to: rslipsky@fs.fed.us. They need to be in message, text, .doc, .rtf, or .pdf format. Written comments should be sent to: Rachel Lipsky, Snoqualmie Ranger District, 902 SE North Bend Way, Building #1, North Bend, Washington 98045. Office hours for submitting oral, telephone, or hand delivered comments are 8:00 am to 4:30 pm Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. Comments may also be faxed to (425) 888-1910. Hand-delivered comments can be taken to the Snoqualmie Ranger District office at the above address. For comments by telephone, contact Rachel Lipsky at (425) 888-8750.

I am the Deciding Officer for this project. After this scoping period, the Forest Service will prepare a draft environmental assessment (EA) and conduct a 30-day pre-decisional comment period. The Forest Service will then document project analysis in a final EA and I will prepare and release a decision notice (DN) and finding of no significant impact (FONSI) documenting my decision and rationale. My decision will be subject to appeal under 36 CFR 215 by those who submitted timely comments during the 30-day comment period. My decision will be posted on the Forest web at www.fs.usda.gov/goto/mbs/projects and also mailed to those who commented on the project. Comments received in response to this letter, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be part of the Project Record and available for public review.

For more information about this project, please contact Rachel Lipsky, Environmental Coordinator, for the Skykomish and Snoqualmie Ranger Districts at the email address or phone number listed above.

I appreciate your interest in this project. We believe it will have many benefits – to the public, to the cabin owners, and to the natural resources in the area. Thank you to those who have already provided comments or questions and/or attended the public meeting. We look forward to hearing from all interested or affected parties.

Sincerely,

/s/ James Franzel

JAMES FRANZEL
District Ranger
Snoqualmie Ranger District

Enclosures: Location map, site plan

ⁱ We are particularly interested in hearing from cabin owners about this aspect of the proposal. The concern is that with access blocked elsewhere, public parking will become a problem on this road. We can make the decision to close this road as part of this project, and then choose not to implement the closure unless it becomes needed. However, if we don't make the decision to close this road now, it may be years before we can get the time and money to do a separate environmental analysis to close this road.