



**DECISION MEMORANDUM FOR THE INTERIM CHIEF**

**THROUGH:**

Christopher B. French *Christopher B. French*  
Acting Deputy Chief, National Forest System  
National Forest System

Date: 9/20/18

**FROM:**

George C. Iverson *George C. Iverson*  
Acting Director  
Ecosystem Management Coordination

Date: 9/25/2018

**SUBJECT:**

Excelsior Mine Road Reconstruction – Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest

**FILE CODE:**

1230

**ISSUE / RECOMMENDATION:**

Re-delegate authority to make a decision whether to approve the road reconstruction proposed in the Excelsior Mine project.

Option 1: Re-delegate authority to make the decision whether to approve the road reconstruction proposed in the Excelsior Mine project.

Option 2: Deny re-delegation.

I recommend the Chief re-delegate authority to make the decision to approve the road reconstruction proposed in the Excelsior Mine project for the following reasons:

- To use the existing non-system temporary road “upper road” would allow access to both mine portals.
- To restore Inventoried Roadless Area character of the Upper road subsequent to mining operations.
- Alternative route (“Lower Road”) would require construction of a new bridge within very unstable soils at an estimated cost of \$600,000. A forest plan amendment would most likely be required to use this route. Increased risk of sedimentation and potential slope failure raises impact risk to aquatic and hydrological resources.

**BACKGROUND:**

The referenced activity falls under the Chief’s review process of May 31, 2012. The Forest has requested approval to make this decision.

Reconstruction of approximately 0.6 miles of non-system road to provide access to existing mining claim. This action falls within the exception provided at 36 CFR 294.12(b)(3).



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Twenty-nine comments were received, all stating that this project would violate the Rule. This project provides reasonable access and minimally impacts the roadless characteristics.

**DECISION BY THE INTERIM CHIEF:**

Approve: Victoria O. Johnson

Disapprove: \_\_\_\_\_

Discuss with Me: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: Oct 2, 2018

Enclosures (3)

**Roadless Frequently Asked Questions  
Excelsior Mine Plan of Operations  
Region 6, Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie NF, Mt. Baker Ranger District**

**General Information**

- The Project proposes to authorize the use and maintenance of an existing non-system temporary road (upper road) within the Mt. Baker (north) Inventoried Roadless Area (IRA) to access the Excelsior mine. In addition, the project would authorize mine maintenance and underground sampling activities. All mining activities are within National Forest System Lands and partly within the Mt. Baker (north block) IRA (16,425 acres).
- Overall approximately 1.2 acres of a 16,425 acre IRA would be affected.
- This is a non-discretionary locatable mineral project, subject to the General Mining Law of 1872.
- Twenty nine comments were received from the public during the scoping period, the majority stating that the project would violate the 2001 Roadless Rule by building a new road.
- An alternative route outside of the IRA was considered; however it would require extensive repairs, including a new bridge over a highly unstable area, in order to allow access to the mine portals. Use of the non-system temporary road would allow access to both mine portals while minimizing impacts to surface resources.
- Proponent has a statutory right to explore and develop for locatable minerals, subject to the General Mining Law of 1872.
- An environmental assessment (EA) is being conducted by the district, with a decision expected by fall of 2018 to approve a new plan of operations.

**Roads**

- No new roads would be constructed within an IRA. Only an existing non-system temporary road would be utilized for access.
- Access routes would be reclaimed subsequent to mining operations.

**Timber Cutting, Sale, or Removal**

- No timber cutting is proposed in the plan of operations; however, there may be a need to fell hazard trees adjacent to the access route or mine portal.
- Any felled trees would be left in place.



File Code: 2810

Date: 08 March 2018

RE: Line Officer Certification

Prospectors discovered the Great Excelsior mineralization in 1900. Two years later, the mine was incorporated and miners constructed a 20-stamp mill to recover gold by crushing, gravity concentration, and mercury amalgamation. Mining and milling operations terminated in 1917. Doug McFarland, current mine claimant, re-staked the Wells Creek group in 1972. From the early 70s to the early 90s numerous core drill holes were completed along with geologic mapping, geophysical and geochemical surveys. In recent years, the mine has seen little activity, mostly consisting of hand sampling and underground mine repairs.

In 2013, the district received a plan of operations to improve access to the unpatented mine and conduct mine repairs and mineral sampling. Due to environmental concerns connected with re-opening the historic access route (FSR 3700-031, lower road), the project was put on hold until a geotechnical review could occur and more information was obtained from the claimant. The current plan of operations only includes the use and maintenance of a non-system temporary road (upper road), mine maintenance, and a scaled back sampling program.

There are two access routes to the mine, a classified maintenance level 1 road (lower road), and a non-system temporary road (upper road). The "upper road" is located within an inventoried roadless area; however, it is entirely intact and would only need minor maintenance to allow access to both mine portals. Although the "lower road" is outside of inventoried roadless, it would need extensive repairs, including a new bridge over a highly unstable area, in order to allow access to the mine portals. The "lower road" was initially considered, but rejected due to the amount of potential resource damage that could occur by installing a new bridge and the effects to resources in trying to maintain that route. It was determined that the effects to resources would be considerably less by utilizing the "upper road" for access. The non-system temporary road is approximately 0.6 miles long, occupying approximately 1.2 acres.

The proposed action involves road maintenance and use, mine maintenance, underground sampling, and reclamation activities. All mining activities are within National Forest System Lands and partly within the Mt. Baker (north block) Inventoried Roadless Area (IRA). The proposed action involves the following key activities:

- Use and maintenance of Forest Service Road 3700-033 and the non-system temporary road (upper road)
- Mine maintenance, including re-opening the blacksmith portal for a secondary safety exit and replacing decayed support timbers within both mine adits (only the blacksmith portal is within an IRA)
- Underground sampling, including the removal of mineralized and unmineralized material from within the mine
- Reclamation activities, including the decommissioning of the non-system temporary



# MT. BAKER RANGER DISTRICT EXCELSIOR MINE - PLAN OF OPERATION LAND-USE ALLOCATIONS

**Road Operational Maintenance Level**

- 1 - Basic Custodial Care (Closed)
- 2 - High Clearance Vehicles
- 3 - Suitable for Passenger Cars

**Road Washout**

**Non-Forest Service Temporary Road**  
"Upper Road"

**Mt. Baker North Inventoried Roadless Area**

**Mt. Baker "MA" Inventoried Roadless Area**

**Land-Use Allocation**

- Congressionally Reserved
- 10E ~ Wilderness - Special Areas
- 5A ~ Recommended Recreational River
- 5B ~ Recommended Scenic River

**Other**

- 5A ~ Recommended Recreational River
- 5B ~ Recommended Scenic River

**Land-Use Allocation**

- Late-Successional Reserve (LSR)
- LSR ~ Late Successional Reserve
- 1B LSR ~ Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized, LSR

**Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest Boundary**

**National Forest Wilderness Boundary**

**Road**

- Mine Adit
- State Highway
- Trail

**USFS Road Number**

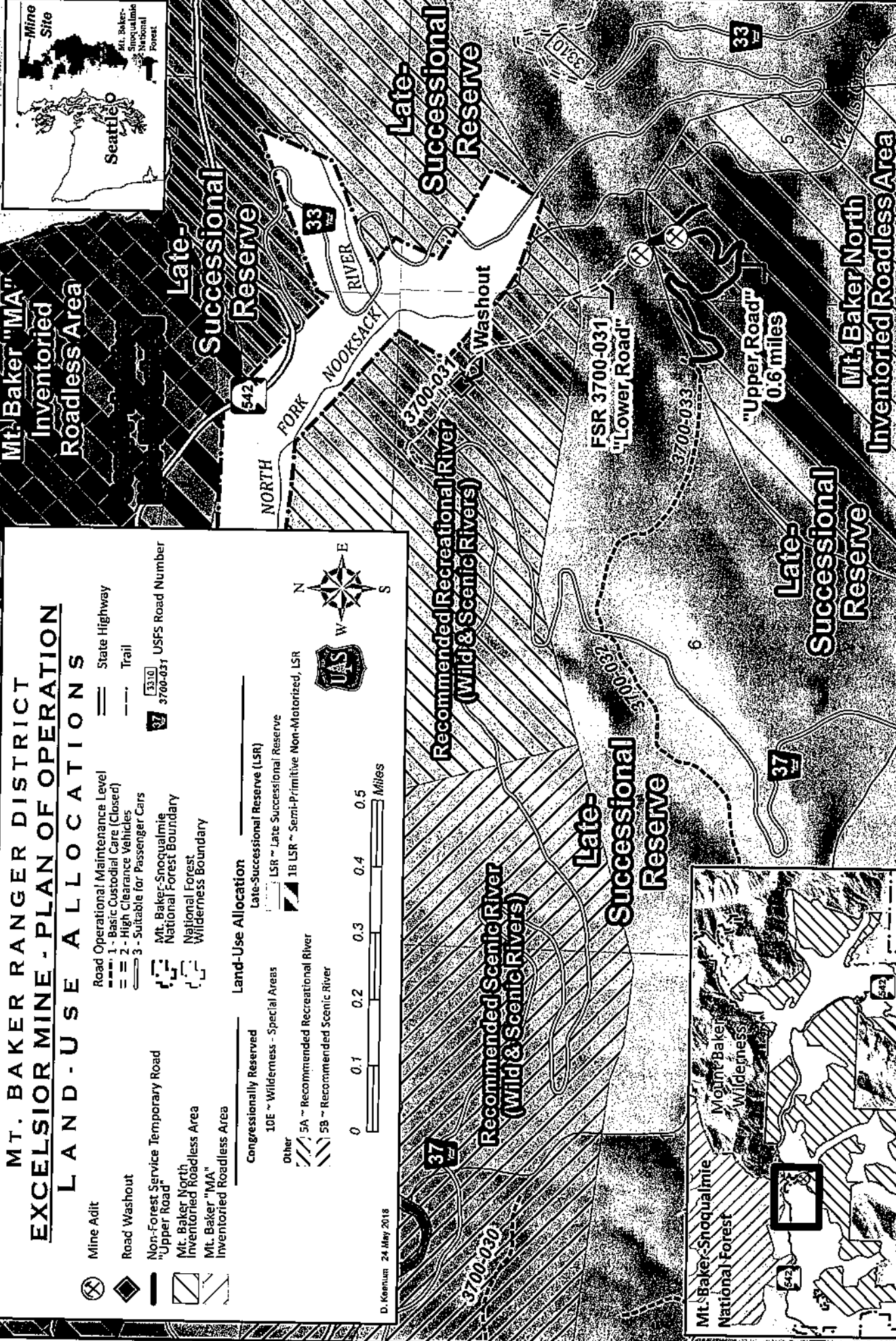
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- 3700-031

**Scale:** 0 0.1 0.2 0.3 0.4 0.5 Miles

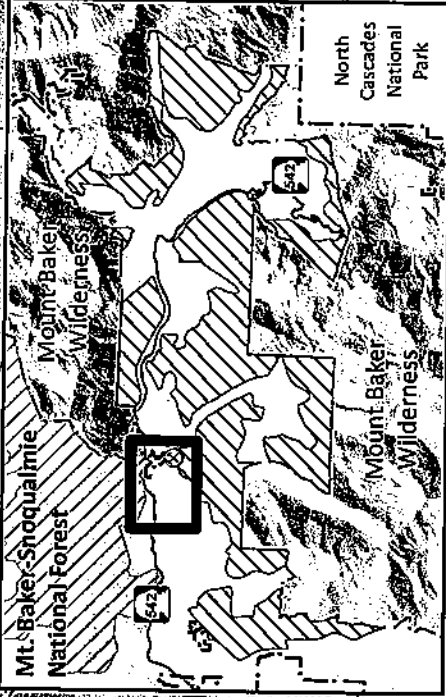
**Compass Rose:** N, S, E, W

**USFS Logo**

D. Kennum 24 May 2018



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**Pictures of the Upper Road provided by R6**

**Excelsior Mine Road Reconstruction**

**September 19, 2018**









