

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

October 26, 2009

Mr. Gary Larsen  
Supervisor, Mt. Hood National Forest  
16400 Champion Way  
Sandy, Oregon 97055

Dear Supervisor Larsen:

We are writing to you today to comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Mt. Hood Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Travel Management Plan.

As you are aware, transportation in and around the Mt. Hood National Forest has been and continues to be a priority and concern for us. It was also a critical piece of the recently passed Lewis and Clark Mt. Hood Wilderness legislation, which became law as part of the Omnibus Public Lands Act in March of this year.

In November 2007, we sent you a letter (attached) expressing our commitment to work with you to address problems pertaining to the Forest's nearly 3,500 miles of roads and major corridors that lead to and from the Forest. In that letter, we expressed our concerns that "the proposed LaDee OHV area would include a road that runs between the existing Salmon Huckleberry and proposed Roaring River Wilderness areas." We also noted that many of our constituents were concerned about the overlaps of the Bear Creek area with the Middle Fork Wild and Scenic River boundary and the close proximity to what is now the Elk Cove/Mazama Wilderness Area.

We are concerned that one of the two preferred alternatives described in the DEIS, Alternative 3, includes a number of OHV areas that ignore the necessary protections for Wilderness areas we addressed in 2007. The fact that that these OHV routes are still being considered, particularly in the light of newly passed Wilderness designations, ignores the heightened potential for illegal incursions of motor vehicles into Wilderness. Illegal motorized use into the Salmon-Huckleberry Wilderness Area has already been documented, and that road is a strong candidate for future decommissioning.

While the vast majority of OHV users are responsible in their use of the National Forest, it would only take a few irresponsible parties to permanently damage the Wilderness areas that should be protected. As you know, Congress has designated these areas as particularly worthy of protection, and we urge you to keep that view in mind as you move forward with the OHV Travel Management Plan. We encourage you to take an appropriate approach to the management of OHV use in the Mt. Hood National Forest in a way that respects and protects the experience of other visitors as well as the Mountain's wildlife habitat and scenic values.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments. We look forward to your response and to working with you to address these critical issues in the Mt. Hood National Forest. If you have questions, please contact Mary Gautreaux in Senator Wyden's office (503-326-7525) or Hillary Barbour in Congressman Blumenauer's office (503-231-2300).

Sincerely,



Ron Wyden  
United States Senator



Earl Blumenauer  
United States Representative