

March 7, 2016
PO Box 1011
Bellingham, WA 98227



Erin Uloth, District Ranger
Mt. Baker Ranger District
810 State Route 20
Sedro-Woolley, WA 98284-1263

RE: Upper Nooksack Access Travel Management Project Draft Plan

Dear Erin,

On behalf of the Whatcom Mountain Bike Coalition, our Board and Advisors, I would like to thank you for all of the work your team has put into the Upper Nooksack Access and Travel Management Plan (ATM).

We understand the financial hurdles that the USFS has with maintaining the current 137 miles of road along the Upper Nooksack Corridor. We do, however, believe the USFS hasn't done enough in the past to involve the recreationalists to help maintain the important roads and can do better on this in the future. Not only will involving the various user groups help with maintenance defer the costs of maintenance, but it also creates an element of stewardship for these access points.

In reviewing the 3 Draft Alternatives provided, we feel that both Alternative A and Alternative C are non-starters for conservationists and recreationalists. Keeping ALL of the existing roads open in Alternative A doesn't confront the ever-declining budgets for road maintenance in the forest and will ultimately lead to more catastrophic failures of the road system and continue to deposit excessive sediment into the Upper Nooksack and its tributaries.

Alternative C, on the other hand, will eliminate many important access points for recreationalists including Canyon Creek Road which is the only access point for mountain bikers (and motorcycles) along the Nooksack corridor via the Canyon Ridge trail. It also provides important winter access to the snow community – particularly snowmobilers and backcountry skiers/snowboarders.

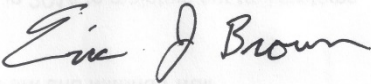
As a result, the WMBC supports a modified version of Alternative B – which continues to provide access to important recreational trails and trailheads while decommissioning roads that are not used for regular access. Our organization has signed on to a joint letter with seventeen recreation and conservation groups that provide more details on how a modified version of Alternative B would be achievable.

As you are aware, the WMBC presented a detailed proposal to reroute the Canyon Ridge Trail (attached) for better sustainability / user experience and both FR 31 and FR 3140 are important to our group as Canyon Ridge trail is between those two roads. Decommissioning of Canyon Creek Road would mean eliminating the only trail access mountain bikers have in your district. Additionally, it could potentially mean that residents of Glacier wouldn't have a safe evacuation route if a Lahar event were take place from Mount Baker or Mount Shuksan. Last, we would suggest involving Homeland Security / Border Patrol to help with ongoing maintenance costs of Canyon Creek Road since it is a heavily utilized road for their officers.

While Canyon Creek road is of particular importance for the mountain bike community, as hikers and general lovers of the outdoors, there are many important access points that need to remain open and we believe that is achievable with careful planning, better communication to the user groups and regular/proactive maintenance.

If you would like to further discuss any of these items with myself or the WMBC Board, please feel free to reach out to us. Thanks again for all of your team's work on this important project for our community.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eric J. Brown". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Eric" and last name "Brown" clearly legible, and "J." as a middle initial.

Eric Brown

Trail Director, WMBC

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Cc: WMBC Board of Directors