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Comments: Although I understand the need to repair the gate on the Spirit Lake tunnel, I am strongly against building a new 16-foot-wide road across the Pumice Plain, where scientists have their 40-year-old research plots that contain priceless longterm information on the world-renowned ecological story at Mount St. Helens. The plots are irreplaceable. The mission of the Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument is to study its ecosystems. It is completely against the Monument's mission to destroy the research plots and alter the ecology of the Pumice Plain with a wide, 3.5-mile-long road that would carry large, polluting vehicles.

I therefore propose that the USFS consider a modified version of Alternative C: Windy Ridge to Duck Bay (intake Gate) and Helicopter Use (Geotechnical Drilling). This alternative could be modified by using helicopters to move equipment, such as drill rigs, in and out of work sites seasonally while work crews would travel daily by utility terrain vehicle to Duck Bay, transfer to boats for travel to the southwest lake shore or the tunnel gate, and the travel again by utility terrain vehicles, as needed, to drill sites.

Again, I urge you to carry out the mission of the Monument, which is to protect natural processes and empower scientists to study the amazing, inspiring, unique place called Mount St. Helens. Please respect the land in your care and display responsible stewardship by using helicopters and small terrain vehicles instead of blazing a new, wide, long and highly-destructive road with highly-polluting vehicles that would harm both terrestrial and aquatic wildlife as well as plants.

Thank you for your conscientious, careful leadership on this issue.