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Comments: I am a member of the Washington Native Plant Society and was shocked to find out that you are considering building a road across the Pumice Plain at Mt. St Helens. As Congress designated research as a primary objective at Mount St. Helens National Monument at its establishment in 1982 and the 1985 Comprehensive Management Plan identifies the Pumice Plain as a Class 1 Research Area because "it is the most scientifically important and sensitive area in the monument" how can you destroy this research? Scientists were assured that long-term research would not be disturbed by management actions. The proposed action will severely impact or totally destroy long term research projects. This significant impact must addressed through a full EIS and a preference for least disruptive options.

The proposed alternative road will cross 15 stream channels on the Pumice Plain and this is where plant colonization has been most rapid. By destroying this you are also decreasing wildlife habitat.

I understand you also would be closing down the Truman Trail for 5 years and turn it into a gravel road and limit access to many other trails including the Loowit Trail, one I hike often.

I agree with the WNPS that you should treat research on the Pumice Plain as an important value of Mount St. Helens and to give it priority in decision-making. This means:

- * Implement the least controversial and least disruptive option,
- * Consider a Modified Alternative C that will incorporate components of Alternative Drilling 6 (move equipment in and out seasonally while work crews travel daily by utility terrain vehicles and boats to reach work sites) and Gate Replacement 3 (move equipment in and out seasonally by helicopter to Duck Bay and barge to gate structure while work crews travel daily by utility terrain vehicle and boat to the gate structure)

What is so disturbing is that this would not be happening like this if it were a National Park....a big reason why it should be to give it adequate protections.

Thank you for considering my comments.