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Organization:

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Comments: Dear USFS:

I am writing to object to the Draft Plan for the Spirit Lake Tunnel Intake Gate Replacement and Geotechnical Drilling Project #57259. My objections include:

1. The USFS draft fails to explicitly acknowledge the ecological significance of the Pumice Plain. It also fails to acknowledge the world-renowned research done on the Pumice Plain which has enabled the public to understand Mount St. Helens' amazing scientific story. Given that the US Forest Service is in charge of stewarding and protecting this research, it seems sadly ironic that there is no mention of how important the Pumice Plain and its research plots are.
2. The Draft is flawed because it did not thoroughly address scientists' concerns. Specifically, there is no detailed analysis of the impact of the proposed roadbuilding and use on terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems.
3. The Draft failed to study other alternatives besides B and C, which both combine the drilling with the tunnel repair. Yet those two projects need not be paired. It is the tunnel that is an urgent problem.
4. The US Forest Service should meet with the Pumice Plain scientists to better identify all of the research plots on the Pumice Plain and how best to avoid them. The Draft only mentions two research plots to avoid. There should be a way to repair the tunnel and conduct the drilling without running a 3-mile road across roughly 30 research plots, some of which have been ongoing for decades.
5. This process must include an Environmental Impact Statement. It is a National Volcanic Monument.
6. The draft is flawed because it assumes that Pumice Plain ecosystems will return to their pre-road condition within 2 to 15 years after the road is removed. That is ecologically impossible.
7. There should be a resolution meeting for all objectors.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.