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Comments: The DEIS fails to mention or describe the legislated purposes of the Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument. It fails to analyze whether the proposed alternatives are compatible with these purposes, specifically those listed in Sec. 4(b)(1). Consequently, many of the alternatives go beyond and/or violate provisions in the MSHNVM Act that require management to protect natural geological and ecological processes.

I support Preferred Alternative 2 + Alternative 9 to achieve safety goals while protecting Monument resources and processes. This alternative is the most cost effective because the tunnel already exists. It also generates the least sediment mobilization into the Toutle River. However, the Forest Service should consider the 2018 UTV Route to Duck Bay as an alternative to a road across the Pumice Plain to the barge-landing site for Alternative 2. Constructing a new Truman Trail Road across the Pumice Plain would be a ground-disturbing activity that would impact several research sites. Such a road would be 16 feet wide and would require constructing 21 crossings of creeks, drainages and wetlands.

I oppose Preferred Alternative 7 + Alternative 5. This proposal would heavily impact natural geological and ecological processes without providing essential safety improvements. Excavation would convert wetlands, ponds and lakes on the debris avalanche into a flowing stream. Lowering Spirit Lake by 40 feet would alter vegetation communities on the shoreline and aquatic vegetation in the lake.

Artificial restoration of Spirit Lake to anadromous fish is inconsistent with the legislative provision of the MSHNVM Act. Agencies should instead focus on repairing downstream degradation of habitat caused by decades of human-caused impacts. Restoring fish passage to Spirit Lake is an attempt to put the landscape back to what it was before the May 18, 1980 eruption. It ignores the fact that we have entirely new landscapes, including a much-changed Spirit Lake, the Pumice Plain and a debris avalanche. The Monument is about watching natural evolution and its contributions to our ecological knowledge. It is not about recovery to the state that existed prior to the eruption.