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Comments: This is my 3rd comment. The USGS is the premier source of volcanic hazards information for Mount St. Helens. I strongly urge the USFS and planners to become well-informed about the eruptive history and to take it seriously. The following publication, although more than three decades old, synthesized some of the most important insights about the recent history and behavior of Mount St. Helens

Pallister, John S.; Hoblitt, Richard P.; Crandell, Dwight R.; Mullineaux, Donal R., 1992, Mount St. Helens a decade after the 1980 eruptions--Magmatic models, chemical cycles, and a revised hazards statement: Bulletin of Volcanology, v. 54, no. 2, p. 126-146.

Important points:

1. The 1480 (now updated to late 1479 CE) eruption produced possibly 2 or 3 times the volume of tephra as the 1980 eruption. The following eruption, which occurred between about November 1481 and May 1482 produced about the same amount of tephra as the 1980s eruption. The next large eruption, sometime between about 1490-1510 (Yamaguchi, 1983), was about the same volume of tephra, and volcanic activity continued, according to Pallister and others, until the mid 1700s. Within roughly half a century, the volcano erupted again in 1800. Activity was noted until 1857 according to historical accounts. The hiatus between 1857 and 1980 is the longest of the past 546 years, and importantly, large eruptions have been closely spaced in the past.

2. Even small eruptions can produce significant lahars. Examples at Mount St. Helens include the March 19, 1982, February 3-4, 1983, May 14, 1984, and May 1986 eruptions, explosions, and dome collapses that produced lahars that reached Spirit Lake, and in the case of the 1982 and 1984 events, far down the Toutle River. The presence of snow on the mountain amplifies the lahar hazards during eruptions.