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## Mount Rainier National Park News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### National Park Service Announces Decision on Access to the Carbon River Area

Chris Lehnertz, Pacific West Region Director, National Park Service, has issued a decision and a *Finding of No Significant Impact* (FONSI) for the *Carbon River Area Access Management Environmental Assessment* (EA). Lehnertz's decision sets the future direction for management of public access to this spectacular area of Mount Rainier National Park.

The Carbon River Area Access Management Environmental Assessment, consistent with direction provided in the Mount Rainier National Park General Management Plan, presented a description and analysis of several alternatives for the management of the Carbon River Road. The FONSI authorizes implementation of Alternative 2, which includes the conversion of the road to a hiking and bicycling trail. Effort will be made to retain intact sections of the historic road and the trails connecting these sections will be improved to better accommodate bicycle use. The Ipsut Creek Campground will be converted for use by backcountry campers. When funding becomes available, a new auto campground is planned on properties in the expanded park boundary area, away from the threat of flooding.

Superintendent Dave Uberuaga acknowledged the difficulty of the decision, but emphasized the opportunity it presents, "Carbon River is an incredibly special area of the park for me and many others. We think it will become a destination for bicyclists and hikers when they learn what the area has to offer. Using a bicycle to get to Ipsut Creek Campground still makes a day-trip into Carbon Glacier feasible, and provides an enjoyable way to experience the area and park."

The historic Carbon River Road was heavily damaged during a November 2006 storm event and has been closed to vehicle use since then. Aggrading rocks and gravel from prior flood events have raised the bed of the Carbon River as much as 31 feet since the Carbon River Road was constructed next to the river in the 1920s. Several sections of the historic road are now lower than the adjacent river and increasingly vulnerable to flood damage.

Implementation of the preferred alternative will occur over the next several years as funding is available. Funding priorities include protection of the entrance and intact sections of the historic road from additional flood damage, improvement of the trail sections, and transition of some visitor services and operations out of the flood plain to nearby facilities on new lands added to the park by Congress in 2004.

The FONSI, EA, Errata and associated documents are available for viewing on-line via the Planning, Environment and Public Comment (PEPC) website at: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/mora/carbon>. For a printed copy of the FONSI, please call Mount Rainier National Park at (360) 569-2211, extension 2301.

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