

October 17, 2008
For Immediate Release
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Mount Rainier Seeks Public Comments on Stevens Canyon Road Repair

Mount Rainier National Park Superintendent Dave Uberuaga has announced the park is initiating the preparation of an *Environmental Assessment* (EA) for proposed road rehabilitation work along two segments of Stevens Canyon Road. In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), the EA will present alternatives for the work and analyze and disclose associated environmental impacts.

The first segment begins at the Nisqually-Paradise Road intersection (Canyon Wye) and continues for 5.0 miles along Steven's Canyon Road to Stevens Creek Bridge. The second segment includes a 5 mile segment from Backbone Ridge Viaduct to the roadway's intersection with State Route 123 at the Stevens Canyon Entrance. Road deficiencies include drainage problems, surface slumps, soft spots, pavement warping and cracking, narrow shoulders, deteriorating historic stone masonry retaining and guard walls. Additionally, there is a pedestrian and circulation conflict at Reflection Lakes causing dangerous conditions for visitors parking and walking to viewing areas. The current layout and grading are also contributing to erosion and associated water quality impacts. If approved, construction would occur in 2011, and could include water withdrawal from park waters for dust control, culvert replacements, and removal and/or addition of parking turn-outs within the above segments.

The 19 mile Stevens Canyon Road serves as the sole east-west access across the park, linking the Nisqually-Paradise Road to State Route 123 and cross-park access to the popular Paradise area and Henry M. Jackson Memorial Visitor Center. The road also provides access to numerous day-use areas (Box Canyon, Reflection Lake, Backbone Ridge, Inspiration Point, etc.) as well as various trailheads leading to the historically significant Wonderland Trail. The road and stone masonry walls are contributing elements to the National Historic Landmark District. The current character of the road and the visitor driving experience are key considerations when evaluating possible alternatives for road rehabilitation. Wetlands and sensitive wildlife species are also abundant in these areas. The park's intent is to avoid or minimize impacts to these resources and to visitor experiences to the best of our ability.

Mount Rainier National Park was established to protect and preserve the park's natural and cultural resources and to provide opportunities for visitors to safely experience and understand the park environment in a manner that does not impair park resources and values. The park's approved General Management Plan (2002) allows for general road maintenance and minor modifications for resource protection and visitor safety.

An early step in the NPS planning process is to involve the public. The park is inviting comments from individuals, organizations and other agencies to help identify the range of issues to be addressed in the EA, as well as potential alternatives for reducing impacts to park resources, visitor access and safety. Those wishing to provide comments should submit them in writing to: Superintendent, Mount Rainier National Park, 55210 238th Ave. E., Ashford, Washington 98304; or electronically at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/> and choosing Mount Rainier National Park from the drop down menu. Your comments should be post marked or electronically date stamped no later than November 17, 2008. Additional opportunities for public review and comment on the EA will be announced in the winter of 2009.

Your comments, including your personal identifying information (name, address, telephone, e-mail address) – may be made publicly available at any time, if requested under the Freedom of Information Act. While you can request your personal identifying information (name, address, telephone, e-mail address) be withheld from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

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