

Olympic National Park
600 E. Park Avenue
Port Angeles, WA 98362
March 16, 2018



Dear Friends,

The National Park Service (NPS) is requesting your input in developing an Environmental Assessment (EA) for an Olympic Hot Springs Road geotechnical investigation for Olympic National Park (ONP). The comment period will open on March 16 and close at midnight Mountain Time on April 1.

Background

Since the recent removal of the Glines Canyon Dam, the Elwha River has been in a state of flux. Sediment from the former Lake Mills continues to aggrade the river. During fall, winter, and spring storm events and melt-off, the river has been overflowing into the adjacent floodplain and damaging the Olympic Hot Springs Road, leading to repeated closures and expensive repairs. The National Park Service, in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration Western Federal Lands Highway Division, need to conduct a geotechnical investigation to collect information on the subsurface conditions of Olympic Hot Springs Road and an area being considered for a potential road relocation.

In order to inform the analysis for a potential road relocation out of the floodplain, a geotechnical investigation will determine the engineering feasibility of a new location within the forested bench near the current road. An environmental assessment (EA) is required when considering a geotechnical investigation in this location due to the potential impacts on the human environment and the area is not previously disturbed.

Purpose and Need for Taking Action

The park's purpose in taking action is to assess subsurface conditions of the Olympic Hot Springs Road. This action would determine the feasibility of the potential relocation of a portion of the road outside of the floodplain. The analysis of a potential relocation would occur in a subsequent environmental assessment that would address long-term planning for the Olympic Hot Springs Road.

Decision to be Made

The NPS Pacific West Regional Director will use the findings of this EA along with substantive comments on the EA submitted by the public during the review periods, to decide which alternative to adopt and whether the preferred alternative has the potential for significant and adverse environment impacts. The Regional Director's decision will be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) which concludes the NEPA process. If the NEPA process determines that the selected alternative has the potential for significant adverse impacts that

cannot be effectively mitigated to a level below significance, the NPS must then begin the process to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement or decide to take no further action.

Preliminary Alternative Concepts

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires federal agencies to consider a range of alternatives and fully evaluate all reasonable alternatives that address the purpose and need for the action, including a no-action alternative. The following is a brief description of preliminary concepts that have been developed by NPS staff. Please provide us with your thoughts about these initial alternatives, and offer any ideas you might have for additional alternative concepts.

Alternative A (No Action): The no action alternative would maintain current management practices along the Olympic Hot Springs Road. A subsequent EA to analyze the potential relocation of a one mile section of the Olympic Hot Springs Road would not be needed nor completed.

Alternative B (Conduct a Geotechnical Investigation): Approximately 28 borings would be drilled within the existing roadway and off-road section along a new potential relocation to investigate subsurface conditions. Access to the off-road test boring sites would require constructing an access path up to ten feet wide and approximately 4,800 feet long. The path would start about 1,000 feet north of the Elwha Ranger Station and end about 800 feet north of the Sanders Creek temporary bridge. A 300 foot long path may also be constructed on the north side of the bridge to gain access to one boring location. Monitoring instruments would be installed at the off-road test boring sites to collect data and monitor slope stability for one year. The data would be used to determine the feasibility of a potential relocation of this one-mile section of Olympic Hot Springs Road out of the floodplain. There may be multiple trail closures needed for up to 3-days each to facilitate drilling operations in the vicinity of the public access trail.

Resources and Impact Topics

Impact topics are topics that need to be considered in the course of developing a successful project that is consistent with governing laws, regulations and policies, and park resources. Impact topics will be addressed in the analysis of the proposed project and its alternatives. Some preliminary impact topics identified during internal scoping for the Olympic Hot Springs Road Geotechnical Investigation EA include: soils, water resources, vegetation, archeological resources, wildlife, special status species, and soundscapes.

Next Steps

NEPA outlines the process that Olympic National Park will follow during the development of the EA to generate solutions and analyze the effects of each alternative. Park staff encourage public participation throughout the planning process. There will be two opportunities to comment formally on the proposed geotechnical drilling – one now during scoping and again following release of the EA. Comments received during the scoping period will be used to help define the

issues and concerns to be addressed in the EA, while also assisting with analyzing the different alternatives.

Tentative Timeline and Where We Are in the Process

Steps of the Planning Process	Tentative Timeline	How you can be involved
Conduct internal scoping, define purpose and need, and develop preliminary alternatives	Winter 2017	
*Conduct external scoping	Spring 2018	Provide your comments and ideas about the preliminary alternatives.
Analysis of public comment	Spring 2018	
Refine alternatives	Spring 2018	
Identify environmental impacts and select/develop preferred alternative	Spring/Summer 2018	
Prepare draft plan/environmental document	Spring/Summer 2018	
Public review of draft plan/environmental document	Spring/Summer 2018	Provide your comments about the Draft EA.
Analysis of public comment	Spring/Summer 2018	
Prepare final plan/decision document	Summer 2018	
Release final plan/decision document to the public	Summer 2018	
Begin implementation	Summer/Fall 2018	
NOTE: After a year of monitoring, if the data shows that a potential relocation of the one mile section of road to this area would be feasible, the next EA would begin. The next EA would address long-term planning for the Olympic Hot Springs Road, which would include analysis of a potential relocation of the road.		

*Current step in the planning process.

How to Comment

1. Submit comments electronically at: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/OHSgeoscoping>
2. Submit written comments by mail:
Olympic National Park
OHS Road Geotechnical Investigation Scoping
Attention: Sarah Creachbaum
600 East Park Avenue
Port Angeles, WA 98362

Comments submitted by phone or email will not be accepted. Comments submitted by individuals or organizations on behalf of other individuals or organizations also will not be accepted.

You should be aware that your entire comment – including personal identifying information such as your address, phone number, and email address – may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.