

Cape Horn Planning Area public meeting, Rock Creek Center, Stevenson, WA  
March 18, 2009

Questions for Dan Harkenrider who spoke about the process, rationale, and the next steps

Q: When will the preferred alternative be announced?

A: End of May. (clarification: The Environmental Assessment (EA) is scheduled to be released for a 30-day public comment period at about the end of May. It will contain a no action alternative and some action alternatives that respond to the issues raised during scoping). EAs generally do not contain a "preferred" alternative. After the 30-day public comment period, the Area Manager will make a decision and announce it publicly with a Decision Notice. This is scheduled for early to mid June. A 45-day appeal period follows the Decision Notice).

Q: Is it an ADA trail and whose idea was it?

A: Federal regulations provide access for different abilities, so we would try to provide for those opportunities. It's not required, but where we can, we should.

Q: How many specialists have been on this trail?

A: Dan thought most of the specialist had. The gentleman was concerned about the slumping taking place in this area.

Stan Hinatsu previews the alternatives and answers general questions about them.

Q: How are you going to enforce the January 1 to July 1 peregrine falcon closure?

A: Physical barriers and a saturation patrol of the area. Generally, attempts to educate the public first, and then enforcement by writing citations.

Q: Understands the reason for closing that length of trail, but do you need to close the whole area to protect the falcon?

A: It would be easier to enforce the closure at these points. Not sure where else that would be easily defined such as a waterfall. Need a defined place to administer the closure, for example the waterfall.

Q: Is there a possibility to reroute in that area of the peregrine nest?

A: The terrain is such that it's too difficult to find a way around.

Q: Is there a possibility to monitor for a season to see if there is a disturbance?

A: Yes.

Q: Where is the nest?

A: Will show you on the map.

Q: Once you make a decision, it may take years to implement the plan. Is it possible to monitor the nest during this time?

A: I don't think a closure would need to be phased in. Could do an immediate closure of the nesting area if necessary to protect the species.

Comment: The science isn't there.

This comment was deferred to Dave Anderson, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and Chuti Fiedler, Fish and Wildlife biologist, USDA FS, CRGNSA.

Q: Why is there so much concern about this nest when they are nesting in Portland?

A: It has to do with amount of disturbance to the nesting site.

The trail is very close to the nest (approximately 200 feet). Talk with Dave & Chuti about the peregrine.

Comment: I would like Dave and Chuti to tell the whole group about the peregrine nest concern. Is it really necessary to close the trail?

Dan: this alternative protects the falcon by this seasonal closure. I have to weigh public use versus protection of the falcon. I don't want to debate the science issue.

Comment: Can Dave & Chuti speak to this issue. I've done research on the internet and it seems that the peregrine population is increasing.

Q: Are you going to address the safety of people as they get near Highway. 14?

A: Yes. And talk with Justin from Washington Dept. of Transportation WA DOT The proposed highway crossings are tunnels under the highway.

Q: It seems a portion of the trail crosses private property, especially the arrow showing "future trail connections">

A: It's just an arrow that shows potential future trail routing. We realize there's a lot of private land to the east. This arrow does not indicate actual trail location, but is generally headed in that direction.

Comment: No Action Alternative – I know you have to come up one, but have I've never seen the Forest Service chose the No Action alternative.

A: Probably the no action alternative does not meet the "Purpose and Need" for this project: the main purpose is to formalize the trail system and protect the nature resources.

Q: What about funding?

A: Cost is always a consideration, but not the driving force.

Comment: Alternative 1: by going down the road, a lot of people are on private property.

A: By formalizing the trail system, should eliminate this problem of being on private property.

Q: In Alternative 2, is there any way to get to the viewpoints?

A: This alternative would protect the wet areas, so it may not go to some of those viewpoints.

Comment: There's an old flagged route from 15 years ago near the water area; an easy way to get by that water area; on a route to Washougal.

A: Stan knows about that flagged trail.

Q: As a resident on Cape Horn Road, I'm concerned about the traffic there. It's a dangerous road. There's no footpath for hikers. Is there any proposal to provide a footpath along this road?

A: No, not at this point, because so much of this is a private road. Nothing in the current alternatives.

From the Forest Service (Dan?): Our purpose is to develop a formalized trail system that would balance the need for recreational use and protect the natural resources; such as, the need to

protect sensitive resources, such as wet areas. We need a sustainable trail system that is also sustainable for trail maintenance. The purpose is to provide for recreation, but need to protect the resources as outlined in the management plan.

Q: On Alternative 4, the trail would be lead down to a waterfall and back on the same trail?

A: Yes.

Comment: It's a safety issue if people try to walk back along Highway 14 instead of back along the trail.

From the FS:

The draft EA will go out the end of May. We are concerned about the safety issues.

We've been aware of most safety issues; the issue of hiking on Cape Horn road is new to Dan.

These issues will be a part of the EA.

The timeline is: a draft EA out in May, then a public comment period, then decision made as to which is the preferred alternative.

The parking areas are limited by NSA management plan of 25 vehicles or less.

Q: Is parking on Strunk road temporary?

A: The plan would only look at one parking area. The current parking may only be temporary.

We do need to provide some parking but want to minimize this. If Collins becomes a public site, then things could change.

Q: When considering the parking, will you also consider a large area of the trail is located along the road, and so a lot of people will park along the road, which could be a safety issue.

A: That will be part of our policing and enforcement. We will monitor the use of this area. The intent is to get people off Strunk Road into a managed parking area.

Comment: Access should be along 14 instead of coming off Strunk road. You should look at keeping traffic off Strunk road.

A: We have to plan for people who just want to drive up Strunk Road to see the viewpoint and are not hikers on the rest of the trail. The FS needs to plan for that.

Comment: Concern with Highway 14 realignment, one point could be a lookout point.

A: Defer this to the WA DOT person on this issue.

Comment: Not everyone wants to be a hiker, original plan was multi-use trails.

A: We've talked about horses on some of these trails. Mountain bikes may not be appropriate, but maybe if there's a Washougal to Stevenson trail, then that may be reconsidered.

Comment: In the 3 likely alternatives, there's very little loop opportunities.

Comment: Cape Horn road is a county road, could there be a footpath right along side of it that is put in by the county.

From the FS: All of your concerns will be addressed in the EA, and then you can give additional comments when the draft EA is released.

Q: Would there be another alternative to not do anything now until the peregrine falcon is monitored?

Q: Parking area on Highway 14 when it's gone, will there be parking in the abandoned section of the old highway?

A: Dan defers to WA DOT person to discuss this aspect.

Dave Anderson, District wildlife biologist for Washington State Fish and Wildlife, spoke to the group:

There was one known nesting site in the 1980's. It was an ESA species then. Over \$1,000,000 has been spent in bringing the peregrine back. About 5 pairs are nesting on the Washington side of the river. The population has recovered, but Fish & Wildlife are still trying to protect it.

Q: Have you seen a decrease in activity in the past 10 years?

We don't monitor all the birds every year. There's a monitoring plan to continue monitoring. It's considered sensitive and there's a protocol for monitoring. I think it was 2006 when it was first looked at.

Comment: Society doesn't want all wildlife in the cities, it seems like this is an opportunity to see wildlife in the wild. Why not put up interpretive signs about the bird?

A: I would disagree in sending people to look specifically to this site.

Q: Why are there more birds in Oregon side of the Gorge when there are more trails in Oregon (indicating more human contact)?

A: There are more cliffs on the Oregon side of the Gorge, more remote areas, more shaded area.

Comment: This nation is in an environmental crisis; we've got to go the extra mile; we need to protect our environment.

Q: Is there concrete evidence that this kind of disturbance has driven out peregrine/

A: Yes, there are examples of that. There are many other closures across the nation for different raptors that need to be protected.

Comment: Another concern is what happens to the vegetation around the nesting area?

There are many environmental concerns as well as public safety concerns that need to be addressed in this EA

Q: Do Agencies have to use independent science as well as their own science?

A: The Ninth District Circuit courts say that judges have to listen to the FS science. Is it current, reasonable, rational, etc.

The meeting went to the Breakout groups with the Interdisciplinary Team hosting different flipcharts.