

### 3.9 SCENERY AND RECREATION

**Summary** - The following sections show that the action alternatives comply with direction in the Forest Plan (as amended). The primary recreational experience of the area is Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) use. Some proposed actions are designed to ameliorate the effects of inappropriate recreation activities. The effects of the project on scenery and authorized recreation were found to be minimal.

#### 3.9.1 Existing Condition - Scenery

This analysis describes the character of the existing landscape from various viewer positions and the likely outcome for each alternative and examines the various visual quality objectives (VQOs) associated with specific land allocations. Consistency with VQOs is described at section 3.9.5.

The following is a list of viewer positions that are in or close to the project area.

- Clackamas River
- Roaring River
- Highway 224
- Clackamas River Trail (#715)
- Dry Ridge Trail (#518)
- Grouse Point Trail (#517)
- Corral Springs Trail (#507)
- Huxley Lake Trail (#521)
- Fanton Trail (#505)
- North Fork Clackamas River
- Local Open Roads and OHV trails

From these viewer positions, the Forest looks relatively natural. The primary factor influencing scenery has been the fires that have occurred over the past 100 years or more. They have created a landscape that today is a relatively uniform forest. The 36 Pit Fire burned in 2014 and created a mosaic of burned areas mixed with unburned areas that look relatively natural with some areas dominated by dead trees.

A portion of the area is seen from the Clackamas River, Highway 224, and the Clackamas River Trail. This is the same area burned by the 36 Pit Fire. There are occasional vistas of the Clackamas River canyon from these viewer positions, but no views past the abrupt slope break that forms LaDee Flat.

All of the trails and Roaring River go through areas of relatively densely forested stands with no major vista points.

The North Fork Clackamas River has been identified as eligible for Scenic designation in the Forest Plan under the Wild and Scenic River Act, but it was not designated by Congress when other rivers on the Forest were added in 2009. The outstandingly remarkable value for the river is fisheries due to the presence of coho salmon downstream of the project area below a waterfall. The primary use would be by people along the banks fishing for resident trout. Because most of its length is very remote, the river does not have much fishing activity. The river has a visual quality objective of Retention in the foreground and Partial Retention in the middleground as seen from the river bank. The river bank is densely forested except where it

crosses through a block of private property, which has been clearcut. The dead trees from the 36 Pit Fire cannot be seen from the banks of the North Fork Clackamas River.

### **3.9.2 Direct and Indirect Effects**

#### **3.9.2.1 No Action**

Over time, the scenery in the project area would gradually change as trees grow. The uniformity of the stands in the area would continue. The unsightly aspects of unauthorized OHV user created routes such as bare dirt, ruts and mud holes, would continue to exist and over time would continue to expand.

#### **3.9.2.2 Proposed Action**

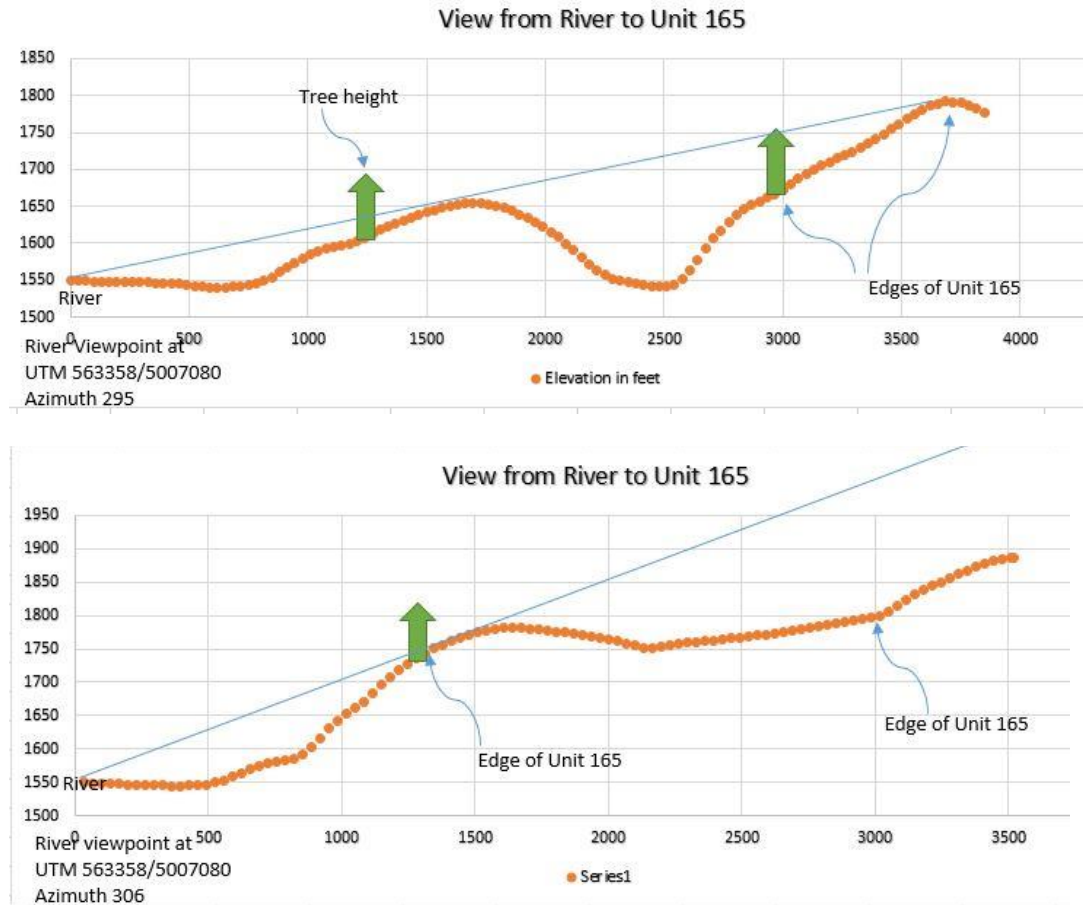
Several aspects of the proposed action have the potential to affect scenery. Logging and fuels treatments can alter canopy density and texture, stumps remain and red slash remains on the ground or in piles. Bare soil and straight lines can be created at landings, skid trails and skyline corridors. The construction of new temporary roads that branch off from open system roads has the potential to alter scenery. The scenery analysis focusses on these viewer positions: the North Fork Clackamas River, Trail 507, and Local Open Roads and OHV trails. There would be little or no change to scenery as seen from the other viewer positions listed at s. 3.9.1 and they will not be discussed further in this report.

**3.9.2.3** This section focusses on the proposed treatment units that are within the viewshed as seen from the banks of the North Fork Clackamas River. A viewshed analysis was conducted in ArcMap to verify the viewshed. The sum total of all the area seen from the river is considered the viewshed in the Forest Plan (page Four-103). The delineation of this area considers only topographic screening and not vegetative screening, therefore the area actually seen by forest visitors is often much smaller due to dense riverside vegetation.

Portions of the following units are within the viewshed: 4, 6, 14, 16, 18, 26, 28, 30, 32, 36, 40, 90, 108, 110, 124, 126, 130, 133, 135, 136, 140, 142, 144, 146, 148, 150, 156, 158, 164, 165, 170, 171, 172, 174, 176, 178, 192, 194, 196, 198, 200, 206, 208, 210, 338, 342, 344, and 364.

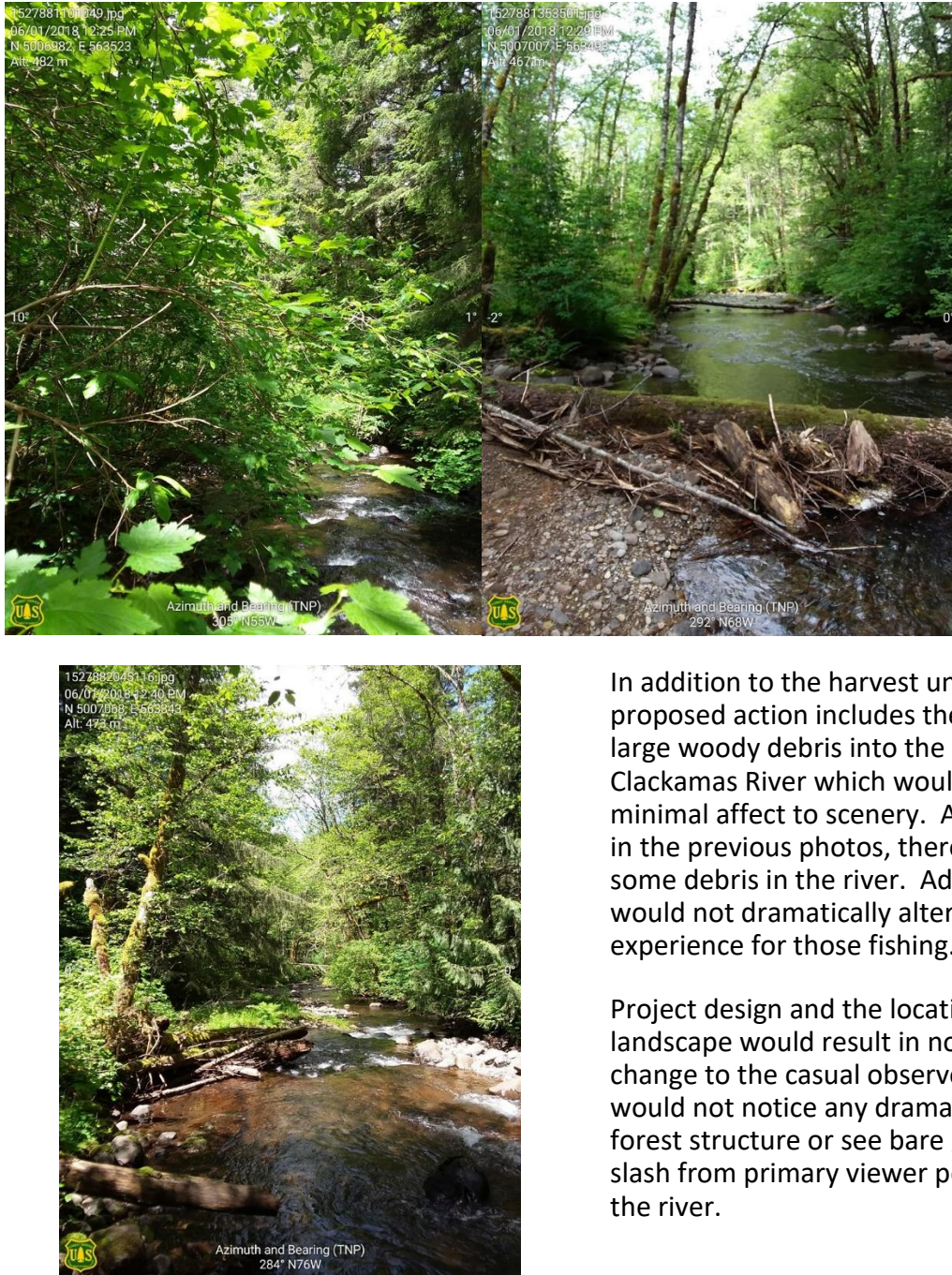
Most of the proposed actions involve thinning intended to introduce variability in the stands. Portions of the stands in stream-protection buffers and skips would be unthinned. Other portions of the stands would have gaps, temporary road construction, landings, skid trails and skyline corridors that would be temporarily open. The rest of each stand would have variable-density thinning. Similar thinning has been implemented in this and other viewsheds and the results confirm that this type of treatment has very little effect to scenery. Thinning would not likely be visually objectionable to forest visitors along the river.

The GIS analysis of the viewshed showed that the most likely area of concern is Unit 165: a 34-acre proposed regeneration harvest. A GIS analysis showed that the most likely place along the river where this unit might be visible is from an area below unit 26 (UTM coordinates – E563358/N5007080, NAD 83, zone 10). The following two profiles show that the unit cannot be seen from the river due to topographic and vegetative screening.



Figures 1 and 2. Views from River to Unit 165.

The river banks are densely vegetated as demonstrated by the following photos taken from three points along this stream reach in the direction of unit 165.



In addition to the harvest units, the proposed action includes the addition of large woody debris into the North Fork Clackamas River which would have minimal affect to scenery. As can be seen in the previous photos, there is already some debris in the river. Additional logs would not dramatically alter the visual experience for those fishing.

Project design and the location on the landscape would result in no noticeable change to the casual observer; the viewer would not notice any dramatic changes in forest structure or see bare ground or slash from primary viewer positions along the river.

Figures 3, 4 & 5. Photos from river's edge.



**3.9.2.4** This section focusses on the proposed treatment as seen from Trail 507. Unit 138 is directly adjacent to Trail 507 and is the only unit of concern for this trail. This trail has a relatively high sensitivity level because it continues into the Wilderness. The proposed action for Unit 138 is thinning with a huckleberry enhancement emphasis. In addition to enhancing huckleberry productivity, the thinning would introduce variability by including skips and gaps. This photo shows the view from the trail toward Unit 138. The Project Design Criteria include a 100-foot buffer to protect vegetation adjacent to the trail. Similar thinning has been implemented along other trails and the results confirm that this type of treatment has very little effect to scenery. Thinning would not likely be visually objectionable to forest visitors along the trail.



Figure 6. View from Trail

**3.9.2.5** This section focusses on what is seen from local roads and OHV trails. Local roads are generally roads that were built by loggers to access the forest for timber harvest. Drivers on these local roads would expect to see other roads and some evidence of logging. They would see a closer view of landings, stumps, skid trails and rock quarries. They would see side roads that have berms. Those riding on OHV trails would see a similar landscape.

The vegetation management elements of the proposed action would be more evident from local open roads, and OHV trails but those viewer positions have much less visual sensitivity. This is primarily due to user expectation and the activities engaged in such as OHV riding, firewood gathering and hunting that are more focused on actions rather than passive viewing.

Thinning, fuel breaks, slash treatment, forage creation, and blocking user created OHV routes are parts of the proposed action that would result in some changes to foreground views from local open roads and OHV trails. Log landings, temporary roads, skid trails and skyline corridors that lead to the landings and slash piles would be noticeable by viewer positions at the landings. Landing size would be kept to the minimum size needed for safety and areas of bare soil would be seeded with grass or covered with ground cover or slash. The stands may have some bare soil, red slash and stumps visible in the short term, but in a few years, this would become less noticeable.

### **3.9.2.6 Alternative 2**

The visual effects for Alternative 2 would be similar to the proposed action except that Unit 133 would have regeneration harvest. It's potentially seen from the North Fork Clackamas River approximately two miles to the west looking east. The view would be very similar to what is modeled above for Unit 165, with dense vegetation on the river's edge obscuring any views.

### **3.9.3 Cumulative Effects**

The analysis area for scenery is the entire viewshed within the North Clack project area. The time frame is relatively long because past regeneration harvests can take 20 to 40 years before the trees grow and become less visually evident. Past actions and the 36 Pit Fire are incorporated into the existing condition discussion. Other ongoing actions in the project area include changes to the OHV trail network that were authorized by the Forest-Wide OHV Environmental Impact Statement, but not yet implemented. Since alterations of scenery would be minimal with the thinning units in proximity to the OHV trail network, there would not likely be any substantive cumulative effects.

### **3.9.4 Response to Comments**

Public comments suggested that the project should create scenic viewpoints by opening up roadside vegetation along primary roads. There are some places that are not considered primary viewer positions that have views. For example, Road 4614 just outside the project area, has dramatic views of the northern Willamette valley and coast range hills. These views were created by large clearcuts on private land. There is a dramatic vista of the Clackamas River canyon along OHV Trail #802 that was created by Bureau of Land Management logging after the 36 Pit Fire.

Within the project area, vistas of distant scenery are not common due to the dense vegetation present. There are vistas at the top of Tumala Mountain, but the road there is rough and not heavily traveled. The action alternatives would result in some additional viewpoints as logging along Roads 4610 and 4613 open up some vegetative screens. The regeneration harvest Units 94 and 96 would open up a view to the southeast, and also Units 191 and 204 would open up some minor vistas. Similarly, some skyline corridors in thinning units would open up narrow viewpoints such as those that would be created in Units 50 and 112.

### **3.9.5 Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines**

Mt. Hood Forest Plan References

Forestwide Visual Resource Standards and Guidelines - FW-552 to FW-597, page Four-107

Forestwide Eligible Wild, Scenic and Recreational Rivers Standards and Guidelines - FW-496 to FW-498, page Four-103

The Forest Plan identifies visual quality objectives both by land allocation (page Four-108) and by viewsheds that are seen from sensitive viewer positions (pages Four-110 and 117).

Table 1. Visual Quality Objectives

Management Area	Viewer Position	Foreground	Middleground	Background
A1 - Clackamas River (Recreational Segment)	River, trails	Partial Retention	Partial Retention	Partial Retention
A1 – Roaring River (Wild Segment)	River, trails	Preservation	Preservation	Preservation
A2 - Wilderness	All	Preservation	Preservation	Preservation
A4 - Special Interest Area	Open roads, high use areas, water bodies	Retention	Partial Retention	Partial Retention
A6 – Semi-Primitive Roaded Recreation	Trails, high use areas, water bodies	Retention	Retention	N/A
A9 - Key Site Riparian	Open roads, streams, water bodies	Partial Retention	Partial Retention	N/A
B2 - Viewshed	Highway 224	Retention	Partial Retention	Partial Retention
B3 - Roaded Recreation	Open roads, high use areas, water bodies	Partial Retention	Partial Retention	N/A
B7 - Riparian Reserve	Stream	Partial Retention	Modification	N/A
C1 - Timber Emphasis	Open roads	Modification	Modification	Modification
Highway 224 viewshed	Highway 224, Campgrounds	Retention	Partial Retention	Partial Retention
Clackamas River Recreational Segments Viewshed	River	Partial Retention	Partial Retention	Partial Retention
North Fork Clackamas Eligible Scenic River	River	Retention	Partial Retention	N/A

Table 2. Visual Quality Objectives for Trails

Management Area	Viewer Position	Near Foreground	Far Foreground	Middleground
Sensitivity Level 1 Trails	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clackamas River Trail (#715)</li> <li>Dry Ridge Trail (#518)</li> <li>Grouse Point Trail (#517)</li> <li>Corral Springs Trail (#507)</li> </ul>	Retention	Partial Retention	Modification
Sensitivity Level 2 Trails	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fanton Trail (#505)</li> <li>Huxley Lake Trail (#521)</li> </ul>	Partial Retention	Modification	Modification
Sensitivity Level 3 Trails	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>OHV Trails</li> </ul>	Modification	Modification	Modification

The action alternatives would meet visual quality objectives because project design and the location on the landscape would result in little or no noticeable change to the casual observer; the viewer would not notice any dramatic changes in forest structure or see bare ground or slash from primary viewer positions. The project would be consistent with Forest Plan standards and guidelines for visual quality management. It would meet the visual quality objectives of Partial Retention and Retention as seen from primary viewer positions because of topographic, vegetative screening, and the diversity of vegetation manipulations. It would meet the visual quality objective of Modification as seen from local open roads and OHV trails because the prescribed treatments would retain leave trees and skips that added visual variety.

While the project is consistent with the many Forest Plan standards and guidelines related to scenery, the following standards and guidelines warrant additional discussion.

**FW-497**

The Visual Quality Objectives for the North Fork Clackamas River is Retention in the foreground and Partial Retention in the middleground. As described in s. 3.9.2.3, the impact to scenery from the action alternatives would be relatively minor based past experience with similar actions and due to the high density of vegetation along the river. As seen from the river, proposed actions in the foreground would not be evident to the casual forest visitor while changes proposed in the middleground might be evident but would be subordinate to the characteristic landscape. The protection of riverside vegetation would result in retaining a very closed canopy that does not allow for views toward treatment areas or distant vistas. Regeneration harvest proposals would not be seen and thinning proposals would retain sufficient leave trees to provide desirable scenery.

**FW-588**

Where Trail #507 crosses through the C1 Timber Emphasis land allocation, the Retention VQO for the near-foreground is changed to Partial Retention for 20% of the trail length. As described in s. 3.9.2.4, the impact to scenery from viewers on Trail #507 would be relatively minor based on past experience with similar thinning actions and due to the density of trees and other vegetation along the trail and the prescribed 100-foot buffer. Thinning would not likely be visually objectionable to forest visitors along the trail.

**C1-007**

Proposed actions include thinning with skips and gaps to create diversity; regeneration harvests that include irregular boundaries, skips, scattered retained trees, and planted trees; restoration of bare ground and ruts created by unauthorized OHV use; rehabilitation of temporary roads with woody debris and other vegetation; and a fuel break along Road 4610 where slash is cleaned up. These design features and the eventual breakdown of red slash and regrowth of vegetation, all contribute to a diverse landscape that would meet the Modification VQO.

**3.9.6 Existing Condition - Recreation**

Even though the project area follows the Clackamas River on the southwest side, there are no proposed actions along the river and therefore the recreation that happens on or near the river are not addressed in detail in this report.

The primary recreational activity in the project area is Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) riding/driving. OHV users and non-motorized recreation visitors share an interest in enjoying outdoor recreation in a natural environment. In 2010, the Forest completed an Off-Highway Vehicle Management Plan. Prior to that time, policy allowed OHVs to venture off roads and trails in areas that had not been specifically closed to off-road use. The plan changed that strategy, and now OHVs are only allowed in specific areas that are designated and signed for OHVs. The only designated OHV area on the west side of the Forest is at LaDee Flat, which is entirely within the North Clack project area. Several roads have been converted to OHV trails and some new trails have been constructed to provide a diversity of terrain and routes suitable for different vehicle types and skill levels. Some of the roads converted to trails have been dramatically altered to create challenging routes while other roads have not yet been dramatically altered.

While OHV recreation is a legitimate activity at LaDee Flat on designated routes; unmanaged and inappropriate OHV use is a potential threat to ecosystem sustainability. While the OHV plan has been in effect for a few years, there are OHV riders that either don't know the new rules or



choose to ignore them. In the project area, there are unauthorized routes that are being used. Some of these are user-created routes, others were existing non-motorized trails that are being used and expanded, some are old temporary roads or skid trails that are being used and expanded, and some were fire lines from the 36 Pit Fire suppression actions that are also being used and expanded. Some OHV use is encroaching into the Wilderness. The Forest has attempted to mitigate the impact of user created OHV trails by intensively closing them with deep layers of slash, debris, root wads and boulders to reduce erosion and to discourage continued use. In spite of these efforts, there continue to be new unauthorized user-created OHV trails. One of the purposes of the North Clack project is to restore areas damaged by unauthorized OHV use and encourage users to stay on designated trails. While some areas have already been treated, others remain.

Other uses of the area include dispersed camping, special forest product gathering, fishing and hunting. There are some non-motorized trails that receive some use by hikers. Fire rings are present at many old landings and road junctions. In addition to the unauthorized OHV use discussed above, other forms of inappropriate dispersed use include target shooting that damages vegetation and garbage dumping. These inappropriate uses occur at low to moderate levels compared to other problem areas across the Forest. Open roads that allow for dispersed uses have declined in recent years through road closure and decommissioning. Other roads have deteriorated from lack of maintenance. The only developed campgrounds in the area are along the Clackamas River and Highway 224.

Road 4610 is the primary access to the area. It accesses the OHV area including a staging area, and a play area at North Fork Quarry. Up to the quarry, it is designated as a dual-use road; meaning that OHV and all other forms of traffic comeingle on the same route. As a result, the road deteriorates very quickly after blading to maintain the surface and the ditches. Pot holes are common as are large puddles that form in the ditch line. Sections of Road 4610 are in need of redesign and reconstruction if it is to continue as a dual-use road.

### **3.9.7 Direct and Indirect Effects**

#### **3.9.7.1 No Action**

With no action, the roads needed for recreation access would not be repaired. The roads that are currently accessible to the public would remain accessible, at least in the short term. They may soon reach the point where they would need to be closed to the public because they would become unsafe. Road 4610 would continue to deteriorate as a dual-use route.

#### **3.9.7.2 Action Alternatives**

Several aspects of the action alternatives have the potential to affect recreation. The proposed vegetation management could affect dispersed recreation opportunities in treated stands, along roads, and at landings. Log haul, road construction, road reconstruction, road closure and road decommissioning also have the potential to affect recreation. Some proposed actions are specifically designed to constrain user created impacts. Several roads including 4610 and 4613 were not designed to handle the intensity of use they currently receive. The action alternatives include some reconstruction of problem road sections to include features such as rolling dips and redesigned ditches and culverts so that the roads can hold up better between maintenance efforts.

The action alternatives include temporary changes to a few segments of roads that have been converted to OHV trails. These are needed for temporary access for logging equipment and log

trucks. To provide for safety, OHV use would have to be temporarily suspended while these areas are used for other purposes.

- Approximately 0.1 mile of Trail #800 that was previously Road 4610011, to access Units 4 and 6
- Approximately 0.1 mile of Trail #801 that was previously Road 4610016, to access Unit 22
- Approximately 1.2 miles of Trail #804 that was previously Road 4610115, to access Units 26, 28, 30, 32, 36, 38, 40 and 322
- The North Fork Quarry, which is used as an OHV play area, is needed for the extraction of rock products.

Some roads would be closed or decommissioned resulting in a longer-term reduction in road-related dispersed recreation opportunities. Approximately 5.7 miles of system roads would be decommissioned and about 26.2 miles of system roads would be closed. Some users may be able to shift to other open roads. Several roads that would remain open would be maintained and repaired. There would be short-term disruptions of dispersed recreation and road related recreation during project implementation. A project design criteria provides for pilot cars during high-use periods to provide an additional measure of safety on dual-use roads.

The action alternatives would convert a portion of Road 4611 to a non-motorized trail, with a small parking area and vehicle turn-around. This conversion would reduce motorized incursions into the Roaring River Wilderness and connect to the Huxley Lake Trail #521 and the Grouse Point Trail #517.

The action alternatives also include the blocking and restoration of approximately 7 miles of unauthorized motorized routes, which are causing resource damage and inappropriate motorized access to the Wilderness.

### **3.9.8 Response to Comments**

Some OHV users want more OHV trails and more variety of trail types to satisfy the demand for use by various vehicle types and various skill levels. Some have advocated to adopt some of the routes that are currently unauthorized into the trail system. They maintain that having a more varied system would keep users coming to the authorized OHV area and would reduce impacts elsewhere on the Forest.

At this time, the currently authorized trail system has not yet been fully developed. A future 1.6 mile trail has yet to be constructed which would enhance loop trail opportunities, and Trail #802/Road 4610113 has not yet been converted. Until the OHV plan is fully realized, it is premature to expand the network of trails particularly when it is challenging to maintain the trails already authorized.

### **3.9.9 Cumulative Effects**

The analysis area for recreation is the same as the project area. This area is appropriate because the recreational activities within this area are relatively uniform including the entirety of the LaDee Flat OHV area. The time frame is relatively long because road construction, logging, and road closures have been happening for a few decades and these continue to affect recreation today. Ongoing actions that would affect recreation include the actions that were authorized in the 2010 OHV plan but not yet implemented. These include the construction of 1.6 miles of new OHV trail, and the conversion of Road 4610113 from a road to a more challenging OHV route.

The plan also authorized the decommissioning of Road 4611132 which has not yet occurred. There are no other foreseeable actions that would affect recreation.

The cumulative change in system roads available for non-OHV related roaded recreation from past actions and the North Clack action alternatives` is a reduction from an original 103 miles, to approximately 36 miles of open system roads, or a reduction of 65%. This change affects the land base available for dispersed camping, special forest product gathering and other uses. Some recreational use such as hunting would require more walking and less motorized access. Similarly, across the Forest, roaded recreation opportunities have been gradually declining as road decommissioning and other road closures occur. These contribute to the cumulative decline of roaded recreation opportunities Forest wide.

The Forest's goal with this action and the other actions that have altered roads, is to balance the need for recreation access with the funding available to maintain roads for safety and minimal resource impact. Access to the most heavily used recreational sites would be maintained. A portion of the project area has gradually transitioned to an OHV destination area while other forms of roaded recreation have declined. Non-motorized recreational opportunities, including trail hiking, would continue to benefit as unauthorized motorized use is contained in designated areas. While changes to recreational opportunities initiated years ago would continue, there would not likely be substantive cumulative effects.

### **3.9.10 Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines**

Mt. Hood Forest Plan References

Forestwide Dispersed Recreation Activities Standards and Guidelines - FW-453 to FW-466, page Four-98

Forestwide Eligible Wild, Scenic, and Recreation Rivers Standards and Guidelines - FW-467 to FW-551, page Four-100

Clackamas River Management Plan, standards and guidelines A1-CLA-01 to A1-CLA-70, Appendix F, pages F10 to F15.

The action alternatives are consistent with recreation standards and guidelines.

### **3.9.11 Wilderness and Other Designations**

The project area incorporates 5,739 acres of the Roaring River Wilderness. Some units touch the Wilderness boundary and the other elements of the project are separated from the Wilderness by roads. The project area also contains 1,681 acres of Inventoried Roadless Area (IRA) which could be considered potential wilderness as it is adjacent to the Salmon-Huckleberry Wilderness. This IRA was not added to the wilderness system in the 2009 Omnibus Public Land Management Act.

No proposed actions would occur in the Wilderness or IRA.

Under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, the portion of the Clackamas River adjacent to the project has been designated as a Recreational river. The river forms the southwest boundary of the project area. A river management plan was completed in 1993 and is incorporated by reference. It amended the Forest Plan, established a boundary and included new standards and guidelines. The river corridor land allocation was changed from B1 to A1. The outstandingly remarkable values include Botany/Ecology, Fish, Wildlife, Recreation and Cultural Resources. The river is also a state scenic waterway. The river corridor is overlapped by the Late-Successional Reserve land allocation. The Clackamas River is also a state scenic waterway.

At the same time, Roaring River was designated as a Wild River. It forms the southeast boundary of the project area. The outstandingly remarkable values include Water Quality, Botany,

Fisheries, Wildlife Habitat, Recreation and Scenic Resources. Except near the river's mouth where it crosses Highway 224, this river is entirely within wilderness.

No harvest is proposed within the river corridor of either of these rivers.

Ben Watts and Jim Roden July 2018

