



PETER GOLDMARK
COMMISSIONER OF PUBLIC LANDS

DEPARTMENT OF
NATURAL RESOURCES

SOUTH PUGET SOUND REGION
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August 4, 2016

Notice of Final Determination
“Mount Teneriffe Trailhead and Connector Trail”
SEPA File No. 16-070101

The Department of Natural Resources issued a Determination of Non-significance (DNS), Mitigated Determination of Non-significance (MDNS), Modified DNS/MDNS on **July 1, 2016** for this proposal under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) and WAC 197-11-340(2).

This threshold determination is hereby:

Retained.

Modified. Modifications to this threshold determination include the following:

Withdrawn. This threshold determination has been withdrawn due to the following:

Delayed. A final threshold determination has been delayed due to the following:

Summary of Comments and Responses (if applicable):

See Attached

Responsible official: Art Tasker

Position/Title: South Puget Sound Region Manager, DNR

Address: 950 Farman Avenue N, Enumclaw, WA 98022

Phone: (360) 825-1631

Date:

8/4/16

Signature:

There is no DNR administrative SEPA appeal.



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Proposed Teneriffe Trailhead and Connector Trail SEPA Comment and Response Summary August 4, 2016

The proposed Teneriffe Trailhead and Connector Trail and related State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) documents were released to the public for formal review and comment on July 1, 2016; the comment period closed at 4:30 PM on July 24, 2016. DNR held four general neighborhood informational meetings for residents of the SE Mount Si Road on Dec 8, 2015 and Jan 26, May 19 and July 13, 2016. The informational meeting in July was held during the SEPA public comment period to provide a project overview and instruct participants on how to submit public comments. In addition, on April 19, 2016, DNR met with King County Roads and Mount Si Road residents to discuss issues associated with the Mount Si Road. DNR also met throughout the year in smaller groups at neighbors' houses to discuss more localized issues related to the proposed project. DNR also maintained a project webpage, hosting this information.

This document was provided to DNR's SEPA Responsible Official – along with a verbatim transcript of all SEPA comments received – for consideration prior to issuing a final determination. DNR staff examined each comment when preparing this summary. This summary does not speculate as to whether any of the opinions articulated in the comments represented a certain quantity of opinions, such as the “majority” or minority” opinion.

COMMENT OVERVIEW

The SEPA public comment period elicited seven comments in total. Comments were received from environmental organizations, recreation user groups and SE Mount Si Road Residents. All but one of the comments expressed strong support for the project. Several comments made additional recommendations. Comments touched on public outreach, issues related to congestion on the SE Mount Si Road and public safety, the design of the trailhead itself, transportation, recreational access, and environmental issues.

COMMENTS ON THE MOUNT SI ROAD AND PUBLIC SAFETY

Comments in support of the project:

- *We wish to thank the DNR for its proactive approach in improving no-parking signage and in working out an agreement with King County to cross-authorize parking enforcement. We have noted a substantial improvement these past two or three months.*
- *WTA supports the Mount Teneriffe Trailhead Project for its forward-thinking approach to add more than 120 parking spaces to a trailhead where cars currently overflow out of the parking area and onto the side of the road, causing conflicts between nearby property owners and recreationists.*
- *We strongly support this project. The number of hikers visiting trails along the Mt. Si Rd. has far surpassed the capacity of existing trailheads. This is so especially at Mt Teneriffe,*

where the “trailhead” is little more than a wide area between the road and the gate. Parking often isn’t available, and as a result some hikers are parking on the road shoulder or in neighbor driveways, creating a driving hazard and very angry neighbors. Additionally, as there are no toilets at the current Mt Teneriffe “trailhead”, the surrounding forest is dotted with human waste. The proposed trailhead will resolve many of these problems.

- *The existing situation where people park at the bottom of the old road is untenable. Known as the “School Bus Turnaround,” school buses can no longer turn around there because the place is jammed with cars. It is a bad situation for everyone. DNR’s proposal to construct a new proper trailhead down the road from the “turnaround” is much needed. It has been thoughtfully designed and planned. We hope it will help relieve some of the current problems of congestion.*
- *I am writing to support the planned Mt. Teneriffe trailhead parking lot. This project will increase safety on the Mt. Si road while enhancing access to Mt. Teneriffe’s trails. As a resident of the Riverpoint development and a frequent hiker on the Teneriffe/ Si trail system, I have a strong personal interest in both issues.... As a local resident, the safety issue is the most important to me. The planned parking lot enables elimination of nearly all parking along Mt Si Road... When cars park nearly at will on Mt. Si Road, as they did before enforcement increased this summer, the congestion is significant and unsafe. The road is already tight, with few real shoulders. Add hikers’ cars on weekends and both sides of the road are packed. Cars must squeeze between them, sometimes going in opposite directions at the same time through the tight squeezes. Hikers get in and out of their cars, opening doors into the roadway..... I have personally seen groups of hikers, four and five abreast, walking in the middle of the Mt Si Road and splitting, half to one side and half to the other side, so I could drive through..... The parking lot provides the expanded parking in a safe, confined, controlled area that is needed to accommodate hikers’ cars that otherwise would seek to park along the Mt. Si Road.*

Comments recommending additional measures to improve safety on the Mount Si Rd:

- *It is essential to deputize DNR personnel to enforce parking requirements on the Mt. Si Road. King County Sheriff’s deputies have been exceptional in their collaboration with DNR to make improvements thus far, but these results aren’t sustainable without the support from DNR deputization.*
- *No further parking lots should be built along Mt. Si Road. The Teneriffe lot should be the last one. Mt. Si Road has enough traffic as it is and should not be forced to absorb more, for safety reason.*
- *On-street parking should be completely eliminated. Those cars now parked along the road are not safe. And anybody who drives to the trails and parks should buy a Discover Pass or pay the one-day fee.*
- *The project should be conditioned to require DNR to seasonally adjust hours when the gates are open such that the trailhead is only open during daylight hours.*

Response:

The proposed project is designed to address the overflow of current parking demand and lack of facilities. DNR will also look at renovating existing access points in the future to improve

public safety, such as paving and striping the Mount Si Trailhead. DNR is working with public and private partners to plan for alternative means of providing access to meet growing demand in the future. Cross-commissioning of DNR law enforcement officers is in process. King County has evaluated the entire length of the Mount Si Road and determined that only a small number of places have a wide enough road shoulder to safely allow road-side parking. Signing the entire SE Mount Si Rd “No-Parking” and raising the parking fine were proposed during the Road Working Group meeting and will require an official county process to implement. DNR will continue to work with King County and neighbors to address enforcement issues along the Mount Si Road. DNR is providing a gate for the proposed trailhead to manage public access.

COMMENTS ON TRAILHEAD DESIGN

Comments:

- *The plans for the trailhead parking lot seem well thought out.*
- *The parking lot design for the proposed site provides an adequate buffer from the road to create both a visual and sound barrier for nearby properties. Amenities are concentrated in the center of the parking lot, preventing trail users from wandering off of DNR property. We also appreciate the quarter-mile connector from the parking lot in the design proposal provides a direct route to the existing Mount Teneriffe Trail without passing behind nearby private lands. We hope that a connection will be constructed within the same timeframe as the trailhead so that hikers can easily access the Talus Loop and Mount Si from the Teneriffe Trail without walking on SE Mount Si Road.*
- *Overall, we understand that there is a need for a parking area for the Mount Teneriffe Trail, however...the proposed Mount Teneriffe Trailhead parking area is being developed to address demand for parking for trails within the Mount Si NRCA system, primarily the Little Si and Mount Si trails, which have the highest use...the current proposal fails to effectively address the true demand for trailhead parking and safety where it is needed within the system... The parking area should be replaced with a smaller facility in the bus-turnaround area where there are currently 23 spaces along with expanded parking facilities closer to and between the higher used Mount Si and Little Si trails. If a project is approved for this location, the number of parking spaces should be reduced to minimize local impacts and address demand for the Teneriffe Trail only.... The buffer should be increased to 100ft to provide better screening for the adjacent residences... The landscape plan should be revised to include more evergreen trees and shrubs throughout the restoration area and to infill vegetation within the buffer areas as needed to help ensure adequate screening for surrounding properties.*

Response:

Whereas King County requires 30ft street setbacks and 5ft interior setbacks to surface parking, the proposed parking areas are set back approximately 90-200ft from the street and 70ft from adjacent property lines. The vegetated buffer around the proposed parking area includes 50ft of undisturbed forest plus an additional 20-150ft of native restoration plantings. The landscape plan will be revised to include more evergreen trees and understory vegetation around the perimeter to improve year-round screening.

DNR staff reviewed all locations where DNR-managed lands front onto the SE Mount Si Road before choosing the proposed trailhead location. Sites were evaluated for the presence of steep slopes, streams, wetlands, unstable soils and critical wildlife habitat. The proposed site was

chosen because it is flat, dry and covered in a relatively young stand of trees. The site by the school bus turn-around was rejected due the presence of a Sallal Water Association water tank on site that provides water to the local community, steeper slopes that would require extensive regrading and/or retaining walls, and an 80+ year old stand of trees. There are no suitable DNR-managed areas to expand parking near the Little Si and Mount Si Trailheads.

The primary purpose of the proposed trailhead is to provide much needed parking, information and facilities for the Mount Teneriffe Area. During community meetings and through working with a traffic consultant, DNR learned that there is an overall deficit of designated off-street parking spaces for the NRCA in general, and that people might continue to walk on the road between trailheads to access the different trails. As a result, DNR is viewing all of the Mount Si NRCA trails as a single system, accessed from three locations along the SE Mount Si Road and other locations along the SE Middle Fork Road. DNR will be formalizing low elevation connections between the different trails so that they can be accessed from any of the trailheads, which together with increased parking enforcement, should further reduce the incidence of visitors parking and/or walking along the road.

COMMENTS ON RECREATIONAL ACCESS AND TRANSPORTATION NEEDS

Comments:

- *As the greater Puget Sound region sees an increase in population, we have seen an increase in demand for access to high-quality recreation.... Increasing available parking is important to recreationists in the I-90 corridor. However, providing additional parking should be balanced with finding innovative transportation options to trailheads. WTA appreciates that the design was optimized for future shuttle service. We hope to see DNR's continued collaboration with the town of North Bend, King County and others to find sustainable alternative transportation solutions like shuttle service.*
- *This terrific new project is an essential component of a regional effort to sustainably manage increasing demand for recreation access throughout the Snoqualmie River Valley. By connecting trails and increasing recreation capacity near the community of North Bend, local businesses harness an economic benefit from outdoor recreation, which is a \$22 billion industry in Washington State.*
- *A parking area should be identified and developed for hikers in downtown North Bend, and a shuttle service established to take hikers to and from trailheads. This will enable the City of North Bend to capitalize on its recreational assets and gain more economic benefit. It also will enhance the city's reputation as a recreational center.*
- *Use of the Teneriffe Trail along with all other trails in the Mount Si NRCA has skyrocketed in the past few years... DNR's proposal to construct a new, proper trailhead down the road from the "turnaround" is much needed.... Use is increasing so much and so fast that other means of getting people to trails in the North Bend area will need to be found, such as shuttle services from North Bend. Those ideas are in the works, but for right now a new trailhead at the location proposed for Mt. Teneriffe is the best thing to do to accommodate the ever increasing numbers of visitors.*

Response:

DNR and other public land managers have seen a dramatic increase in recreational use in the I-90 corridor over the last 10 years and this trend is expected to continue. DNR is working with public land managers, non-profits, recreational user groups and local municipalities and

communities to develop and advertise the use of alternative means of transportation centered around local business districts, such as North Bend. These initiatives include use of shuttles, regional trails, and designated trail connections between local communities and surrounding public lands that will also benefit local economies.

COMMENTS ON PUBLIC OUTREACH

Comments:

- *We especially appreciate the extensive outreach you've made to our community to seek input.*
- *Thank you for your diligent work to incorporate recreation needs and community feedback in this proposal*
- *DNR has done a wonderful job reaching out to neighbors of the proposed trailhead, listening to their feedback, and crafting a proposal that is a winner solution for all.*
- *I have participated in several of the community meetings regarding the Teneriffe parking lot project and look forward to continued involvement in the future*

Response:

DNR manages 5.6 million acres of forest, range, aquatic, agricultural, conservation and commercial lands for present and future generations. Approximately 3 million acres are state trust lands that generate more than \$200 million each year in non-tax revenue, much of which supports public schools, state institutions and county services while providing habitat for wildlife, clean air and water, and opportunities for outdoor recreation. Approximately 150,000 acres are managed as conservation lands, such as the Mount Si NRCA, which conserve high quality native plant communities, habitat for sensitive, threatened and endangered species, archeological and culturally significant sites and resources, and exceptionally scenic landscapes while providing opportunities for low impact recreation.

As a long-term manager of public lands, DNR considers transparency and accountability in decision making as a vital component of building and maintaining public trust. At the local level, DNR considers ourselves to be a member of the community and a neighbor. Staff in local offices value and rely heavily on our relationships with public and private stakeholders and volunteers to stay informed, adapt to new conditions, and find creative approaches to complex issues.

We appreciate the honest feedback that we received and the active participation by the Mount Si Road community in not just identifying issues but also helping to find solutions. We are looking forward to continuing to work together.