



## Reiter Foothills Forest Update – October 22, 2009

Reiter Foothills Forest has long been a popular recreation area, attracting off-road enthusiasts, campers, hikers, equestrians, mountain bikers, and hunters. Unfortunately, the popularity of and demand for recreation in Reiter has resulted in damage to water quality, stream banks, fish spawning habitat, and the forest's trust assets (trees). To remedy these problems, the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) must **temporarily close** Reiter Foothills Forest for restoration and construction **beginning November 2**. DNR is committed to providing motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities in Reiter.

### What is DNR doing at Reiter Foothills Forest?

DNR and partners from local communities, user groups, and other state and local agencies have been working to find solutions to the problems facing Reiter—not only to protect the area's natural resources, but to provide diverse recreation opportunities for the public that are safe and sustainable. Solutions include:

- Early actions to improve conditions.
- Restoration, trail planning, and construction.
- Developing a long-term management plan for recreation at Reiter.

### Early actions to improve conditions

- **Spring and summer 2009:** To improve public safety and raise awareness about resource protection, DNR stepped up law enforcement presence and volunteer patrols with clearer guidelines and signage.
- **June 2009:** DNR closed some ORV trails to reduce the loss of fish habitat and sediment overload, and to protect downstream health.

### Restoration, trail planning and construction

The temporary closure will allow DNR to continue with much-needed restoration work, identify areas suitable for trails, and provide access for long-term sustainable use.

- To better achieve our goals of correcting the problems in Reiter, we are **temporarily closing the area beginning November 2** to everything but foot traffic. The gravel pit parking area will also be closed.
- Restoration is already underway to reduce sediments from getting into streams and to rehabilitate some stream banks.
- We will be assessing additional restoration needs this winter, with additional projects scheduled for winter and spring.
- Beginning in December, we will be working with a trail specialist and interested citizens in determining the best locations for trails and, where possible, begin constructing trails, once we've obtained permits and as soon as weather permits.
- **We are NOT closing the area permanently.**

## **Why can't we ride ORVs, horses, or bikes in the area at the same time it's being restored?**

- If you've ever tried to remodel your house when you're living in it, then you might have a clearer picture of why we need to temporarily close the area. It's more efficient to do restoration, trail assessment, and construction while the area is not being used.
- Closing the area temporarily will also lessen the need for maintenance and full-time education and enforcement presence.
- Late fall, winter, and early spring are the least popular times to ride in Reiter. It only made sense to use this window of opportunity to get the necessary work underway.

## **When will Reiter Foothills reopen?**

- Our goal is to reopen Reiter as soon as possible next year. How much we can reopen will depend on many factors, including how much restoration work gets done, what trails can be constructed, and how well the weather cooperates. Volunteers can help move things along.

## **How can I get involved?**

Throughout the fall, winter, and spring, DNR will be looking for volunteers to:

- Help us identify high-priority restoration projects to address environmental damage.
- Work with us and a trail planner to locate trails (including determining which existing trails might be included as part of the new trail system).
- Help restore damaged stream crossings and plant trees, shrubs and other vegetation, etc.
- Help supplement our limited budget by seeking financial opportunities to pay for materials, signs, and other items necessary for completing restoration work and constructing trails.
- Provide heavy equipment and time to do restoration work and construct trails.

## **What is the long-term management plan?**

- In 2007, the legislature recognized the value of Reiter Foothills Forest and funded the development of a recreation plan. For the past two years, DNR has been working with citizens, user groups, and other partners to create a recreation plan to identify long-term recreation uses and address problems in the area.
- The public can comment on a draft of the *Reiter Foothills Forest Recreation Plan* when it goes through the State Environmental Protection Act SEPA review process in November.
- The recreation plan gives us the structure to provide recreation opportunities in Reiter based on science and public input, along with protecting the state trust lands assets.

For more background and information on the Reiter Foothills Forest planning process, visit:

[www.dnr.wa.gov/RecreationEducation/Topics/RecreationPlanning/Pages/amp\\_rec\\_reiter\\_foothills.aspx](http://www.dnr.wa.gov/RecreationEducation/Topics/RecreationPlanning/Pages/amp_rec_reiter_foothills.aspx)