NATURAL RESOURCES

Ahtanum State Forest Recreation Plan
DRAFT

September 2009

WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF
Natural Resources

Acknowledgements

The Ahtanum State Forest Recreation Plan was created through a public planning process that brought together users, neighbors, interest groups, citizens, and staff from the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to develop a comprehensive plan to direct the future use of recreation and public access within the area. Public input was a key component and the first step in developing the plan. The following individuals and organizations contributed to the development of this document.

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Cover photos:

Left —Eagle's Nest viewpoint, Ahtanum State Forest. Photo: DNR.

Upper right—Ahtanum Planning Work Group members meet at Tree Phones Campground. Photo: DNR/Erin Kreutz.

Lower left—Snowmobilers gather on a winter's day in Ahtanum State Forest. Photo: DNR

September 8, 2009

Greetings:

We are blessed to live in such a beautiful state with unique landscapes and natural resources that create recreation opportunities rivaled by few other places in our country. To maintain these amazing lands for future generations, we have to sustainably plot a course to manage them now and forever.

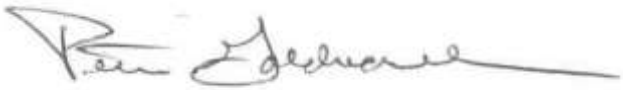
The Ahtanum State Forest is one of these unique landscapes. It lies west of Yakima and provides revenue for Washington's counties and schools, as well as habitat for many species of wildlife. Ahtanum also provides opportunities for diverse types of recreation such as camping, hunting, fishing, horseback riding, off-road vehicle riding, and snowmobiling.

The *Ahtanum State Forest Recreation Plan* is the culmination of two years of hard work by the Ahtanum Recreation Planning Work Group, local user groups, the public, and staff from the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR). I deeply appreciate all of the time and energy these committed people put into making this plan. This plan will provide guidance now and into the future for recreation managers at DNR.

Ahtanum is a popular recreation area, drawing visitors from both sides of the Cascade Mountain Range. Achieving a balance among competing activities and public access needs brings many management challenges that require a high level of mutual coordination, cooperation, communication, and commitment among DNR staff and the many recreation groups, nearby residents, and the general public. We simply cannot do it without the help of those who care the most.

I thank all of the people who worked on this plan for their time and effort. I encourage everyone to stay engaged with staff from the Southeast Region as we put this plan to work on the ground over the coming years.

Sincerely,



Peter Goldmark
Commissioner of Public Lands
Washington State Department of Natural Resources

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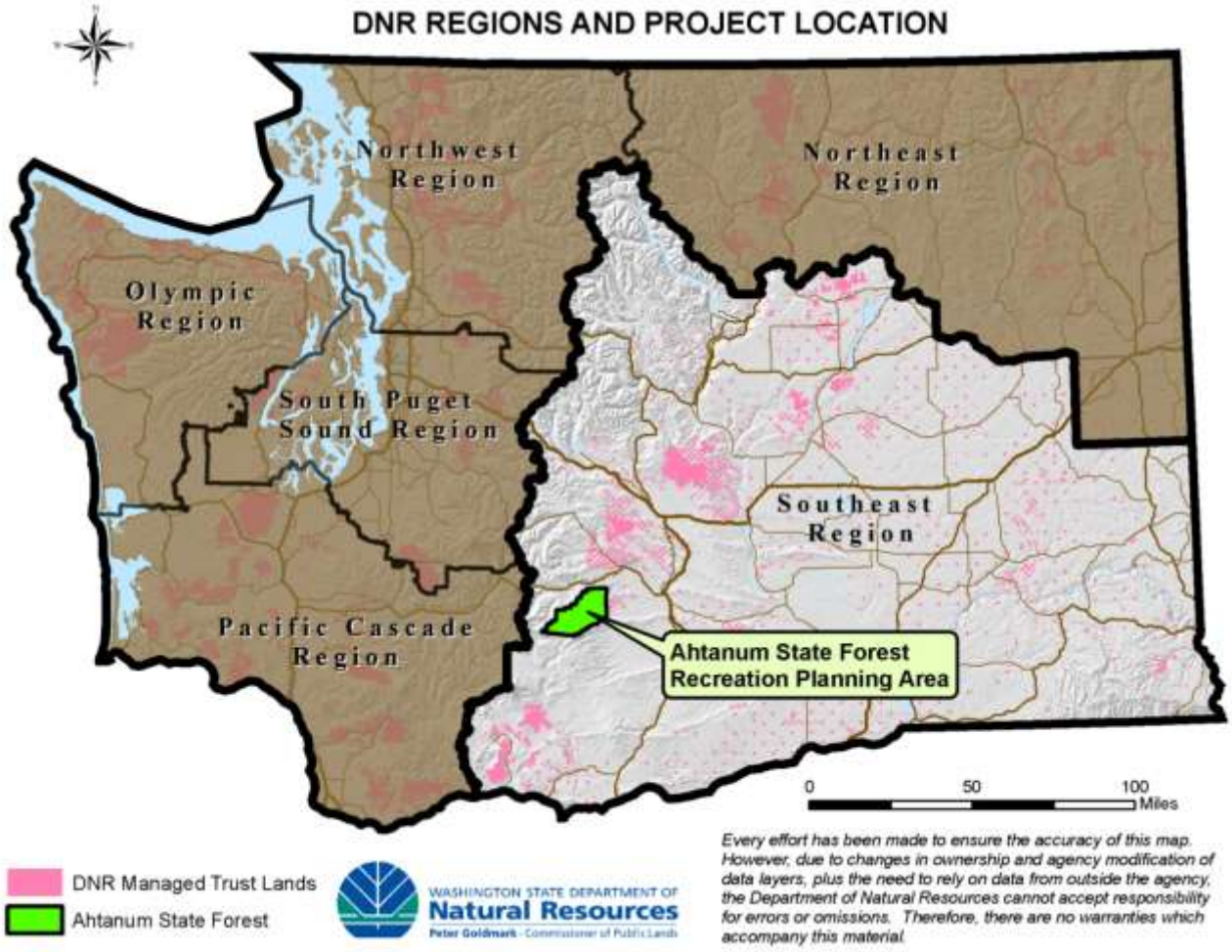
Introduction

The Ahtanum State Forest (Ahtanum) is part of Washington's heritage of public lands managed by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Statewide, DNR manages more than five million acres of state-owned forest, aquatic, agricultural, conservation, and commercial lands for long-term benefit to trust beneficiaries and the citizens of Washington. Revenues produced from DNR-managed trust lands contribute non-tax revenue to fund and support schools, universities, prisons, hospitals, libraries, county programs, and many other public resources.

DNR is organized into six geographic regions (Figure 1). Ahtanum is located in the Southeast Region, approximately 30 miles west of Yakima. In addition to providing a variety of recreation opportunities, the forest also provides revenue to support public schools through timber harvest, grazing and communication sites, wildlife habitat and clean water.

Figure 1. DNR regions and project location.



Ahtanum's 76,000 acres draw thousands of visitors each year for hiking, horseback riding, camping, off-road vehicle (ORV[1]) use, mountain biking, snowmobiling, bird watching, hunting, nature study, sightseeing, and more. Current recreation opportunities in the Ahtanum State Forest include:

- Five campgrounds
- Two trailheads, including a dual-season (winter/summer) trailhead
- One 23-mile motorized trail
- A scenic overlook
- Groomed snowmobile routes
- Dispersed camping areas
- Thousands of undeveloped forest acres
- Green dot roads

Photo: DNR/Toni Droscher

Green dot road sign, Ahtanum State Forest.

The green dot system identifies roads open to the public for vehicular and ORV use. Management of the green dot road system includes a cooperative agreement among DNR and other public and private landowners that allows public access to state lands through and across private ownerships. Maps, reader boards, and route markers with green dots indicate when a road is open to motorized use (see photo, left). Green dot signs on private property indicate that the property owner has allowed DNR and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) to post public access through their land.

The Ahtanum State Forest includes a checkerboard of public and private land ownership. In 2005 and 2007, two large land exchanges were completed that consolidated DNR ownership. This blocking up of DNR–managed lands provides opportunities for improved recreation and forest management, including an improved ability to ensure public access and use of the Ahtanum.

Checkerboard Land Ownership

A pattern of land ownership that divides everyother square mile into public and private ownership. Alternating ownership of adjacent lands can complicate forest and recreation management.

The majority of visitors to Ahtanum are local residents from Yakima, Benton, and Kittitas counties who use the area throughout the year. However, based on proximity to US Highway 12, Ahtanum also gets considerable use by residents from western Washington. A survey conducted in 2008 and early 2009 showed that approximately 30 percent of visits to Ahtanum originate west of the Cascades.

Plan Area Context—A Working Forest

The Ahtanum State Forest is composed of trust lands. The area's primary uses are forest management and livestock grazing. These activities produce revenue for trust beneficiaries—primarily the public school system—while allowing for recreation and providing important habitat for wildlife, clean

[1] Types of ORVs include motorcycles, all terrain vehicles (ATVs), and 4x4s. A place supports ORV use if it allows any, but not necessarily all, of these types of vehicles.

air and water. Land management activities have the potential to affect recreational use through temporary closure of roads, trails, snowmobile routes, trailheads and campgrounds. The Ahtanum also has a rich cultural history, particularly for the Yakama Nation. DNR management and recreational activities will continue to follow relevant guidelines to protect cultural resources, including Governor's Executive Order 05-05, which requires consultation with Tribal entities and the Washington Department of Archeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP).

Offering recreation opportunities in the Ahtanum is consistent with DNR's authority to construct, operate, and maintain primitive outdoor recreation facilities[2] under the 1971 Multiple Use Concept (Chapter 79.10.100-280 RCW). By law, state-managed trust lands are to be managed to produce income for schools, universities, state institutions, county services, and the state General Fund. Since 1970, DNR-managed trust lands statewide have produced more than $5.7 billion in revenue, reducing the need for taxes to pay for public projects and services. In managing the Ahtanum as a working forest, DNR balances the need to:

- Responsibly generate revenue for the trust beneficiaries, as mandated by law.
- Protect the long-term health of the forest's ecosystems.
- Provide safe, sustainable recreational opportunities.

Agency Mission

DNR's agency mission is:

- To provide professional, forward-looking stewardship of state lands, natural resources, and the environment.
- To provide leadership in creating a sustainable future for the trusts and all citizens.

In addition, DNR adheres to the principles of sustainability, public transparency in decision-making, and management decisions based on sound science.

Recreation Program Vision

DNR recognizes the diverse interests and values of the recreating public and the importance of connecting people with Washington's landscapes. DNR's vision statement for recreation and public access is to:

> "Manage public and trust lands in a manner that provides quality, safe recreational experiences that are sustainable and consistent with DNR's environmental, financial and social responsibilities."

[2] DNR's recreation facilities include designated trails, trailheads, campgrounds and other sites, as well as their accompanying amenities, such as signage and restrooms.

Purpose and Use of this Plan

This plan is intended to guide DNR's management of recreation and public access in Ahtanum State Forest for the next 10 to 15 years. It expands on previous planning efforts, outlines recreation program goals, and identifies priorities for improving existing facilities and developing new facilities in the Ahtanum. The use of the plan is two-fold:

- Consider a long-term vision for recreation and public access in the forest by detailing recreation management goals.
- Present specific objectives and strategies to guide recreation and access management over the next 10 to 15 years.

This plan will be evaluated periodically, and changes will be made as necessary to ensure compatibility with trust obligations and overall forest management objectives.

Part I. Goals, Objectives, and Strategies

Project Description

Recreation and public access in the forest is managed by Southeast Region in conjunction with DNR's Recreation Program based in Olympia. Recreation on DNR-managed lands in Southeast Region is generally guided to date by past planning efforts such as the *Southeast Region Recreation Inventory and Assessment* (RIA), which provides a comprehensive overview of recreation opportunities and challenges on DNR lands in the region. However, issues presented by increased public use and the recent "blocking up" of DNR ownership in the Ahtanum go beyond the scope of past planning efforts. To address the need for an updated plan, in 2007, the legislature provided a direct appropriation to fund recreation planning in the Ahtanum (Chapter 46.09.170(4) RCW). Developing the *Ahtanum State Forest Recreation Plan*, as well as conducting recreation planning statewide, is a priority for DNR.

What's in a name?

"Ahtanum" is a Yakama Indian word meaning "stream by long mountain," which refers to the stream along Ahtanum Ridge on the southern boundary bordering the Yakama reservation.

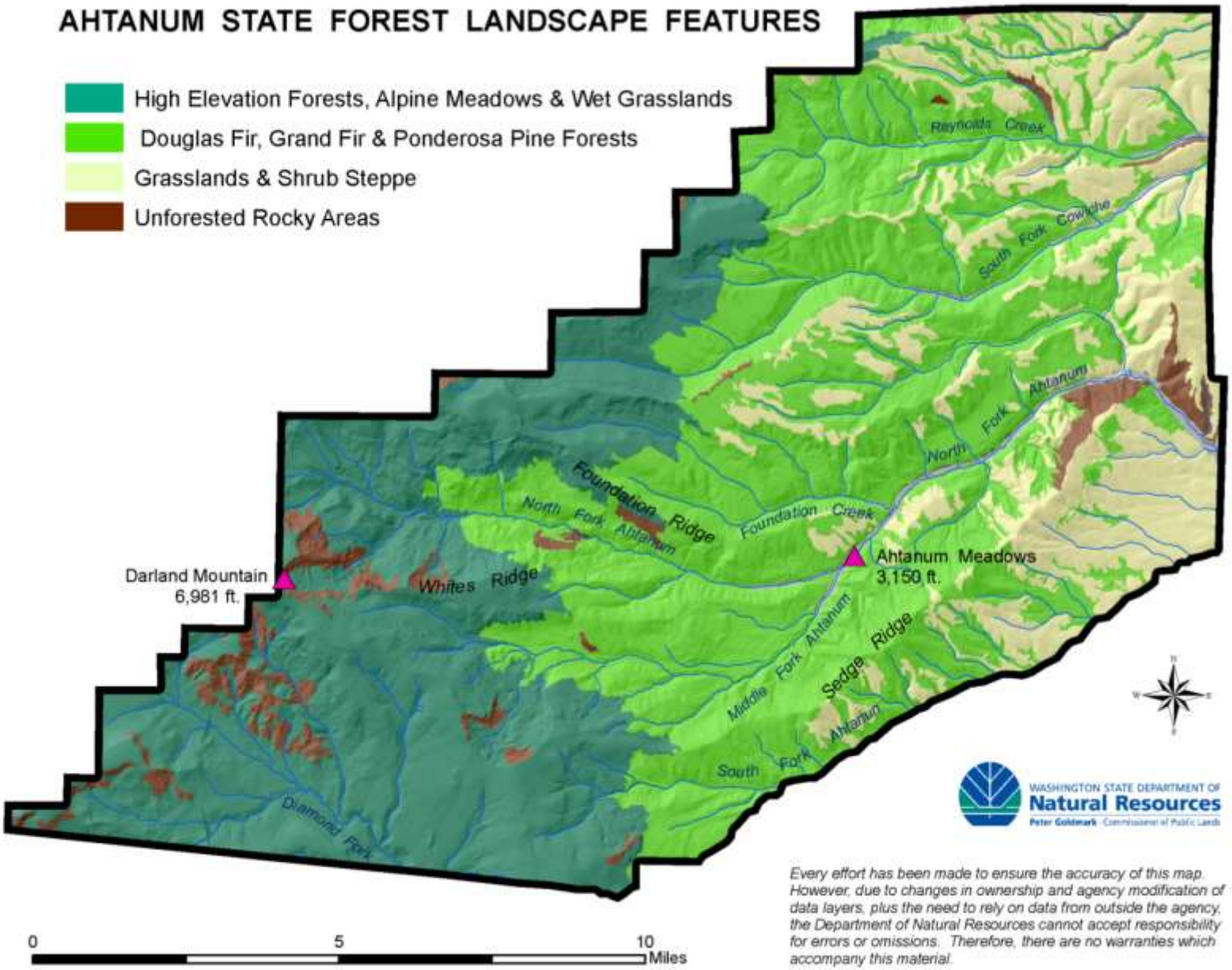
Planning Area Description

The Ahtanum State Forest contains 76,000 acres of highly diverse terrain. Vegetative communities ranging from a shrub steppe ecosystem in the east to a high alpine environment in the west provide a unique contrast and contribute to the forest's popularity (Figure 2).

The Ahtanum is characterized by a number of east-west ridges that rise in elevation to the west towards the Cascade crest. Elevations range from 3,150 feet at Ahtanum Meadows to 6,981 feet at Darland Mountain, which is the second highest location in Washington State that can be accessed by car. The planning area includes:

- Two watersheds—the Ahtanum and Cowiche
- Six watershed sub-basins—Reynolds, South Fork Cowiche, Nasty, Foundation, North Fork Ahtanum, and Middle Fork Ahtanum.

Figure 2. Ahtanum State Forest landscape features.



The combination of the rain shadow behind the Cascade Mountains and elevation-controlled temperatures result in varied vegetative conditions in this area. Higher elevations (5,000 to 7,000 feet) tend to be cool and moist. These elevations receive 45 to 60 inches of annual precipitation and support a plant community of white-bark pine, subalpine fir, Englemann spruce, lodgepole pine, and alpine meadow plant species. Intermediate elevations (5,000 to 3,500 feet) receive 35 to 45 inches of precipitation and host Douglas fir, grand fir, western larch, and white pine. Lower elevations are warm and dry with 20 to 35 inches of annual precipitation and are characterized by ponderosa pine, mixed firs, oak, cottonwood, sagebrush, and various grasses. Snow depths range from 19 feet on the summit of Darland Mountain to 3 feet at Ahtanum Meadows. This heavy seasonal snowfall accounts for the Ahtanum's popularity for winter recreation activities such as snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing.

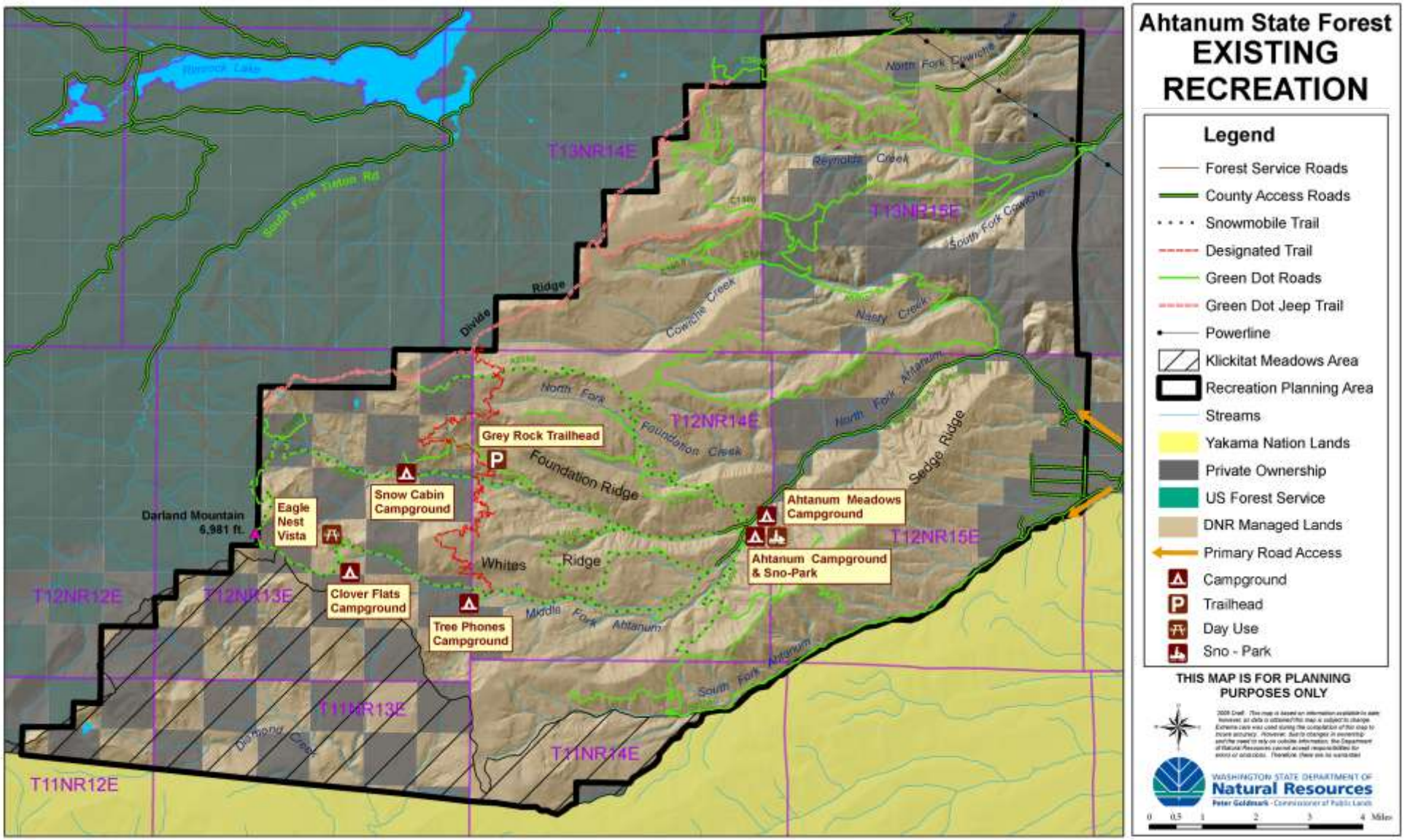
Ahtanum provides habitat for a diversity of mammal and bird species associated with mountain forests. An estimated 300 species of terrestrial animals inhabit the site during at least a portion of the year. Primary habitat associations for these species include riparian areas, snags, late-succession forest, wet meadows, caves, cliffs, talus, roadless areas, and native shrub-steppe vegetation. Based on landscape diversity and the presence of habitat for some threatened and endangered species, the Ahtanum State Forest planning area is covered by DNR's 1*997 Habitat Conservation Plan* (HCP) and the *Forest Practices Habitat Conservation Plan*.

Recreation in the Ahtanum State Forest

Ahtanum offers a variety of outdoor recreation facilities and 23 miles of recreation trails (Figure 3 and Table 1). The campgrounds in Ahtanum were originally built and opened to the public in the 1970s and, for the most part, were situated in popular areas already being used by the public. A large percentage of the camping in the Ahtanum is "dispersed," occurring outside of designated campgrounds.

Access to the Ahtanum State Forest occurs primarily through two routes located in the southeast portion of the planning area. The most heavily used entrance is accessed via the North Fork Ahtanum Road, which begins in Tampico. The North Fork Road is a paved county road that crosses private ownership along the North Fork of Ahtanum Creek and ultimately leads into the planning area. The paved county road ends at the intersection of the Middle Fork and North Fork Ahtanum roads and, at this point, becomes a DNR-managed gravel road. At Tampico, visitors can also access the area via the South Fork Road, another paved county road that transitions to a DNR-managed gravel road.

Figure 3. Ahtanum State Forest existing recreation uses.



The Middle Fork and North Fork are the most heavily used roads and together provide the most direct access to designated recreation facilities in the Ahtanum. The two roads meet to provide a popular loop. As a result of past and present logging activity and road maintenance, the Middle Fork Road is the best maintained and provides access for conventional two-wheel-drive vehicles up to Tree Phones campground. With the exception of Snow Cabin Campground and the Grey Rock Trailhead, all DNR-designated facilities in the Ahtanum are located on the Middle Fork Road. The North Fork Road is more primitive and can be challenging for conventional two-wheel-drive vehicles.

The area identified as the Klickitat Meadows area on Figure 3 (hatched area in southwest corner of the planning area) has no public access easements and is not part of the green dot road system. DNR does not encourage access to this area, and no trails or facilities are planned for Klickitat Meadows at this time.

Day Use Areas

Grey Rock Trail and Trailhead

The 23-mile Grey Rock Trail is a multiple-use trail, originally built in the 1970s by motorcycle users. It runs north to south in the western portion of the planning area and meanders through a variety of forest types, ranging from ponderosa pine forests and dense Douglas-fir-dominated stands to subalpine fir and spruce forests. The southernmost point of the trail begins at Tree Phones Campground. The northern end is the 613 jeep trail, which runs along Divide Ridge on the northwest boundary of the area. The Grey Rock Trailhead is located on the North Fork Road, halfway along the trail, and provides parking for up to eight vehicles. Trailhead facilities include a vault toilet, picnic tables and signboards with information about the forest. The trail is currently open to ATVs, motorcycles, equestrians, mountain bikes, and hikers. Portions of the trail are not currently accessible by ATV due to the narrow trail width, but are being widened to allow for improved access.

Eagle Nest Vista

Eagle Nest Vista is a popular overlook located on the Middle Fork Road. It provides dramatic views of the North Fork Ahtanum drainage, Dome Peak, and the Goat Rocks Wilderness Area. Facilities located at the vista include a parking lot for up to 10 vehicles, a vault toilet, and two picnic sites.

Ahtanum Trailhead

This facility is heavily used throughout the fall, spring, and summer as a recreational parking and staging area. It provides two acres of parking and is easily accessible via a paved county road. It is located immediately west of Ahtanum Campground. While used for snowmobile and winter sport staging, it is also a popular staging area for ATV, motorcycle, and 4x4 users

throughout the fall, spring, and summer. Although designed as a day-use facility, group camping occurs at the site due to facility size and the fact that it can easily accommodate recreational vehicles (RVs) and large trailers. The trailhead is used to stage permitted group events throughout the year. Amenities include a vaulted toilet and an information board. The need for an enlarged facility was identified by DNR in the late 1990s.

Campgrounds

Ahtanum and Ahtanum Meadows

Ahtanum and Ahtanum Meadows are the most readily accessed designated camping areas. They are located on the North Fork of Ahtanum Creek near the terminus of the paved county road. Together these campgrounds include 25 campsites with access to vault toilets and potable water. Ahtanum Meadows includes an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-approved campsite and overlook, as well as an ADA-accessible toilet facility. Both facilities are located at a lower elevation, receiving snow later in the year and are the first to become easily accessible in the spring. Ahtanum Campground remains open and is used during the winter.

BACKGROUND

Tree Phones Campground

Fire lookouts in the area maintained contact by means of a telephone hung inside a hollowed-out tree. The phone was in service until 1957 when two-way radios were first used.

Tree Phones

Based on 2008 survey data, Tree Phones is the most popular camping facility, despite the fact that it is considerably more remote than the Ahtanum Meadows Campground. It is designed as an equestrian facility and includes amenities such as hitching rails, horse trailer parking, and an ADA equestrian loading site. The facility is located on the Middle Fork Road adjacent to the south entrance of the Grey Rock Trail, which accounts, in part, for its popularity. When originally designed, the existing parking area was intended to accommodate stock trucks, which were then the most common mode of transport for horses. Staff observation and public comment have identified the need to consider a larger parking area to accommodate larger horse trailers.

Snow Cabin Campground

In the early 1900s, cabins were built and supplied for snow survey crews. One still stands at the northwest end of Klickitat Meadows. The other cabin was on Foundation Ridge. It burned down and was rebuilt in 1964 at a new site in a clearing just east of the present Snow Cabin Campground. It has since been removed.

Clover Flats

Clover Flats campground is the westernmost camping facility on the Middle Fork Road. It provides eight campsites with vault toilets, picnic tables, fire pits and potable water. This campground is remote, at a high elevation, and accessed by a relatively primitive road. It primarily accommodates tents and smaller RVs. The campground is typically inaccessible from early winter to late spring as a result of heavy snow loads.

Snow Cabin

Snow Cabin is the westernmost facility on the North Fork Road and is the most remote camping facility in the planning area. Like Clover Flats, it is located above 5,000 feet in elevation and is closed from early winter to late spring. It contains eight campsites that provide a more primitive camping experience. General amenities include vault toilets, picnic tables, and fire pits.

Table 1. Inventory of Developed Sites in Ahtanum State Forest

SITE	Details	Allowed Uses
Ahtanum Meadows, Ahtanum Trailhead, and Ahtanum Campground 15 acres Lease #59-058090 1967 – 2016	• 25 campsites • 1 host site • two acres, non-delineated parking • toilets • water	Camping, seasonal parking. Sno-Park pass is required in the winter
Clover Flats Campground 26.4 acres Lease #59-059602 1971 – 2021	• 8 campsites • toilets • water	Camping
Eagle Nest Vista 26.40 acres Lease #59-059602 1971 – 2021	• 2 picnic sites • vista • toilet	Picnicking, viewing
Grey Rock Trailhead	• small, non-delineated parking area for approximately 6 vehicles • toilet	Motorcycling, mountain biking, horseback riding, and hiking
Snow Cabin Campground 30 acres Lease #59-059601 1971 – 2021	• 8 campsites • toilet	Camping
Tree Phones Campground 59.2 acres Lease #59-061129 1975 – 2025	• 17 campsites • snow shelter • 2 ADA toilets • hitching rails	Camping, equestrian use
TRAIL	**Details**	**Allowed Uses**
Grey Rock Trail	23-mile trail	Motorcycling, ATVs with 48-inch or smaller wheel base, mountain biking, horseback riding, and hiking

Management Goals for Recreation in Ahtanum State Forest

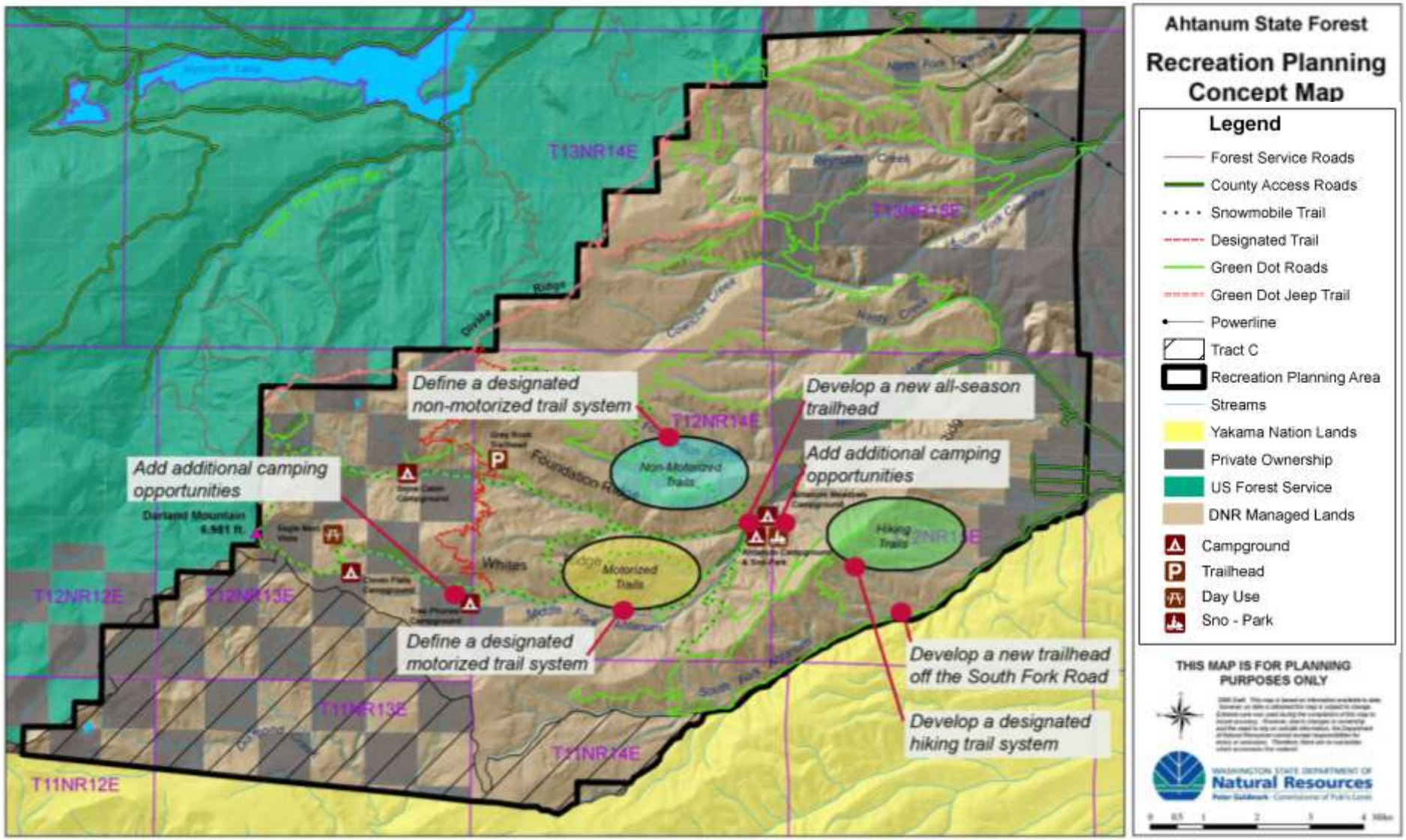
The goals for managing recreation statewide including the Ahtanum State Forest are:

Goal 1: Ensure the safety of the public, department employees and volunteers.
Goal 2: Ensure recreation is consistent with trust obligations.
Goal 3: Ensure recreation is consistent with resource protection.
Goal 4: Provide quality recreation experiences that can be sustained over time.

Recreation Plan Concept Map

The recreation concept map (Figure 4) illustrates a summary of recreation development opportunities for the Ahtanum State Forest. The proposals shown have been identified as the most essential recreation development projects for the forest at this time. These projects were identified by the Ahtanum Recreation Plan Work Group in conjunction with agency staff during the fall of 2008. These projects are ranked in order of priority and are attached to a timeframe in the implementation section of the plan. All project development depends on the availability of funding for development, maintenance and operations, and enforcement.

Figure 4. Concept map of management recommendations**.** Note that green dot roads are open to motorized use throughout the planning area.



Recreation Management Objectives and Strategies

The following objectives need to be consistent with the goals of DNR's Recreation Program. Each includes detailed strategies that provide specific guidance on how to carry out the plan. All objectives and strategies depend on funding for construction, maintenance, management, education, and enforcement. For ease of reference, these objectives and their corresponding strategies are grouped into six categories:

- Sustainable funding
- Partnership and volunteer coordination
- Facility management
- Trail management
- Dispersed recreation management
- Capital facility sequencing

Sustainable Funding

Indentifying sustainable funding sources to meet DNR's facility and trail maintenance needs and supporting capital improvements is essential to ensuring a quality user experience.

Objective A: Pursue sustainable funding opportunities that allow for the construction, maintenance, management, education, and enforcement necessary for facilities and trails.

Strategies

1. Continue to apply for grant funding through the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) and explore additional grant opportunities.
2. Work to educate the public regarding the costs associated with maintaining and operating existing trails and facilities.
3. Pursue alternative funding sources for accomplishing plan objectives.
    - Submit a capital request for implementation of the Ahtanum Plan.

Partnership and Volunteer Coordination

Partnerships with public agencies, user groups, and citizen volunteers are an important component of DNR's ongoing enforcement and maintenance programs.

Objective A: Pursue partnering opportunities for recreation projects with adjacent public agencies, adjacent landowners, and citizen volunteers.

Strategies

1. Form partnerships with citizen volunteers who can maintain trails, act as camp hosts, and provide an overall increased presence on the landscape.

2. Pursue additional opportunities to partner with enforcement personnel from the U.S. Forest Service's Naches Ranger District, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Yakima County, and Yakima County Sheriff's Office.
3. Improve web-based resources that include maps of the area and recreation rules.
4. Increase public awareness of the forest vision, trust mandate, and expected behaviors by encouraging volunteer participation for maintenance and planning, outreach to adjacent property owners, and user education.

Objective B: Promote a more active education and enforcement presence.

Strategies

1. Pursue additional funding to increase education and enforcement staffing in the Ahtanum State Forest.
2. Provide consistent signage that educates the public regarding allowed uses, existing regulations, campfire use, fire danger, and other applicable rules.
3. Provide public information regarding the potential for private property trespass due to checkerboard land ownership.

Facility Management

Campgrounds (Ahtanum, Ahtanum Meadows, Clover Flats, Snow Cabin, and Tree Phones) and day-use facilities (Eagle Nest Vista, Grey Rock Trailhead, and Ahtanum Trailhead) provide unique recreation opportunities for nearby residents and visitors from all over the state. As similar camping and day use opportunities on public lands become more scarce, the facilities in Ahtanum State Forest play an increasingly important recreation role in Washington.

Objective A: Evaluate opportunities for additional or expanded designated campgrounds.

Strategies

1. Evaluate opportunities for designated group camping within Ahtanum State Forest.

   Actions

   - Complete campground capital projects in the following order of sequence:
     - **Campground Priority 1:** Provide additional designated camping opportunities for walk-in and/or group camping by adding a new facility or expanding an existing facility. Consider the location of the historic West Valley Conservation Camp.

- **Campground Priority 2:** Provide additional camping opportunities through expansion and/or redesign of Tree Phones campground including providing additional equestrian oriented campsites and facilities.

- **Campground Priority 3:** Renovate existing out-dated campgrounds to accommodate current recreational equipment and uses.

Strategies

1. Pursue opportunities for a campground designed for hike-in camping in a location such as the site of the historic West Valley Conservation Camp.
2. Continue to acquire and consolidate DNR ownership in the Ahtanum State Forest to provide benefit to the trust and increased recreation opportunities.

Objective B: Promote safety and sustainability through campground and day-use design and management.

Strategies

1. To the degree possible, locate facilities adjacent to major roads to make them readily accessible for maintenance and enforcement.
2. Recruit campground hosts to provide a 24-hour presence in designated campgrounds during heavy use seasons.
3. Ensure that future camping and day-use facilities and renovations to existing facilities are built to DNR standards and are consistent with existing policies, rules, and regulations.
4. Ensure that existing and proposed facilities have the required leases, easements, or agreements to compensate the trust and meet grant funding requirements.
5. Encourage separation of recreation uses through campground and facility design (i.e. facilities designed specifically for equestrian, motorized and non-motorized users, and day-use versus overnight use).

Objective C: Ensure that campground, facility, trail design and location are consistent with DNR's environmental stewardship responsibilities.

Strategies

1. Determine appropriate locations for new recreation facilities and trails based on a land-suitability process that considers habitat protection, soils, geological features, and forest management issues.
2. Ensure that new facility, trail location and design are consistent with DNR's *Policy for Sustainable Forests, Habitat*

Conservation Plan, and other relevant policies, procedures, and regulations.

Trail Management Objectives and Strategies

The Grey Rock Trail is currently the only designated trail in the Ahtanum State Forest. Motorized recreation users also use the green dot road system, which was developed in conjunction with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and private owners to provide public access on non DNR–managed land in the Ahtanum. Portions of the green dot road system are groomed during the winter to allow for snowmobile, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing. Based on survey data and input from the citizen workgroup, additional trail opportunities for both motorized and non-motorized users are a priority.

Objective A: Promote additional opportunities for hiking, motorized and non-motorized trails, and trailhead construction that meet user needs and can be sustained over time.

Strategies

1. Provide a range of trail lengths, loops, and destination trails that provide a range of trail experience.
2. When establishing new designated trails[3], consider incorporating existing user-built trails to the degree possible if they are consistent with DNR environmental and management requirements and are located in appropriate areas.
3. Pursue a management approach that encourages separate areas for motorized and non-motorized use through trail and trailhead design and location:
    a. Focus motorized use south of the Middle Fork Ahtanum Road and on green dot roads.
    b. Focus hiking use in the vicinity of Sedge Ridge.
    c. Focus non-motorized use north of the North Fork Ahtanum Road.
4. Explore the idea of providing an interpretive trail at Ahtanum Meadows Campground to support public use opportunities such as school field trips.
5. Work with user groups to support the development of the William O. Douglas trail system, and look for opportunities for trail linkages.

Objective B: Continue to operate the green dot road system in the Ahtanum.

William O. Douglas, the longest serving justice in the history of the U.S. Supreme Court, was an avid hiker during his boyhood in Yakima. The proposed 75-mile William O. Douglas Trail will connect the City of Yakima and Mount Rainier, honoring the justice's passion for hiking and conservation.

[3] Designated trails are those trails that are maintained, managed, or have been approved by DNR for recreation use.

Strategies

1. Pursue retaining the existing number of green dot road miles, as possible.
2. Encourage Ahtanum recreation user participation on the green dot road committee.
3. Work with landowners to acquire long-term public access easements, rights-of-way, or other access mechanisms that meet the needs of private landowners, DNR, and the recreating public.
4. Promote the placement of green dot roads in areas that serve designated trails and facilities.
5. Promote the design of a green dot road system that avoids access to areas that are environmentally sensitive.
6. Continue to provide consistent maps, signs, education, and enforcement for the green dot road system.
7. Manage the green dot road system to allow alternative routing, if possible or necessary, during forest management activities.

Objective C: Provide safe and sustainable opportunities for winter recreation that are consistent with DNR's funding, trust management and environmental responsibilities.

Strategies

1. Pursue the development of a cross-country ski trail in the vicinity of Ahtanum and Ahtanum Meadows Campground.
2. Work cooperatively with Washington State Parks to continue to provide winter recreation and snowmobiling opportunities that are consistent with land management responsibilities and funding opportunities.
3. Continue to work with local user groups in the event that snowmobile routes are closed for safety purposes such as heavy truck traffic or maintenance.
4. Use seasonal closures to allow for recreation opportunities while protecting roads and other resources.
5. Pursue opportunities with user groups to consider addressing the development of additional winter shelters for snowmobile users, taking into consideration the funding necessary to build, maintain, and provide education and enforcement.

Objective D: Promote safety and sustainability through designated trail location, management, and design.

Strategies

1. To the degree possible, locate trails away from exterior DNR property boundaries, unless trails are part of a planned linked system, to reduce potential for trespass and impacts on neighboring landowners.
2. Pursue trail plans for areas identified as potential locations for motorized and non-motorized trail systems.

3. Consider design principles for trails that include loop trails and destination trails with enough distance and variety to provide a quality user experience.
4. Provide signage that promotes cooperative use of trails by different types of recreation users.
5. Coordinate with adjacent landowners to facilitate potential trail links.

Objective E: Promote safety and sustainability through designated trailhead and parking facility management and design.

Strategies

1. Encourage trailhead design that allows for dual-season use to accommodate both snow-related and non-snow-related recreation activities as funding for maintenance, management, education, and enforcement becomes available.
2. Apply trailhead and parking area design criteria, as resources allow, that include the following:
   a. Mechanisms to clearly delineate parking locations and define lot capacity.
   b. Toilet facilities and other amenities.
   c. Signs that communicate parking information, trail access information, and facility regulations.
   d. Logs or other materials and methods to define the boundary of the facility.
   e. Parking and trail access to accommodate the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
3. Consider providing motorized-use areas for children and novice riders adjacent to motorized facilities to facilitate safe supervision.
4. Complete trailhead construction capital projects in the following order of sequence:
   - **Trailhead Priority 1:** In the vicinity of the existing Ahtanum Trailhead, through facility expansion or new facility construction, provide a multi-use, dual-season trailhead that functions as non-motorized parking in the summer and provides recreation use in the winter. In addition, provide an interim parking area for motorized trail access until a permanent motorized trailhead is constructed at Middle Fork Road (see Trailhead Priority 5).
   - **Trailhead Priority 2:** Provide a South Fork Road trailhead facility for access to non-motorized trails and green dot roads.
   - **Trailhead Priority 3:** Provide an equestrian trailhead facility that supports access to the Dead Horse Flats area or other suitable location.
   - **Trailhead Priority 4:** Evaluate motorized use opportunities in the Cowiche Creek area.

- **Trailhead Priority 5:** Provide a dual-season, motorized-oriented trailhead along the Middle Fork Road.
- **Trailhead Priority 6:** Provide a dual-season trailhead and camping facility in the Dead Horse Flats area on the western portion of the North Fork of Ahtanum Creek.

Objective F: Pursue trail construction capital projects that provide increased and varied opportunities for users and have secured funding to maintain, manage, and provide education and enforcement.

Strategies

1. Work to complete motorized trail construction capital projects in the following order of sequence:
   - **Motorized Trail Priority 1:** Define a designated motorized trail system, including a trailhead, in the area to the south of the North Fork of Ahtanum Creek with a link to the existing Grey Rock Trail.
   - **Motorized Trail Priority 2:** Define a designated motorized trail system in the Cowiche Creek area.
2. Work to complete non-motorized trail construction capital projects in the following order of sequence:
   - **Non-Motorized Trail Priority 1:** Define a designated summer and winter non-motorized trail system in the Sedge Ridge area.
   - **Non-Motorized Trail Priority 2:** Define a designated non-motorized trail system in the area north of the North Fork of Ahtanum Creek (i.e. Dome Peak Vista and Dead Horse Flats).
   - **Non-Motorized Trail Priority 3:** Define a designated non-motorized trail connector between Clover Flats Campground and Eagle Nest Vista.
   - **Non-Motorized Trail Priority 4:** Establish an interpretive trail in the vicinity of Ahtanum and Ahtanum Meadows Campground.

Dispersed Recreation Objectives and Strategies

Activities that occur outside the boundaries of designated recreational facilities and trails are considered "dispersed recreation." Examples of dispersed use include: hunting, fishing, sightseeing, bird watching, dispersed camping, and recreational target shooting, etc. Much of the recreational use that occurs in the Ahtanum is dispersed use.

Objective A: Manage dispersed recreation to accommodate the needs of the public while meeting DNR's funding capabilities, trust mandate and environmental responsibilities.

Strategies

1. Focus dispersed camping in areas away from designated campgrounds such as the North Fork of Ahtanum Creek and the North Fork of Cowiche Creek and in locations that are environmentally compatible.
2. Explore the concept of establishing designated areas that allow for dispersed camping.
3. As resources and funding allow, explore opportunities to provide designated target shooting areas.

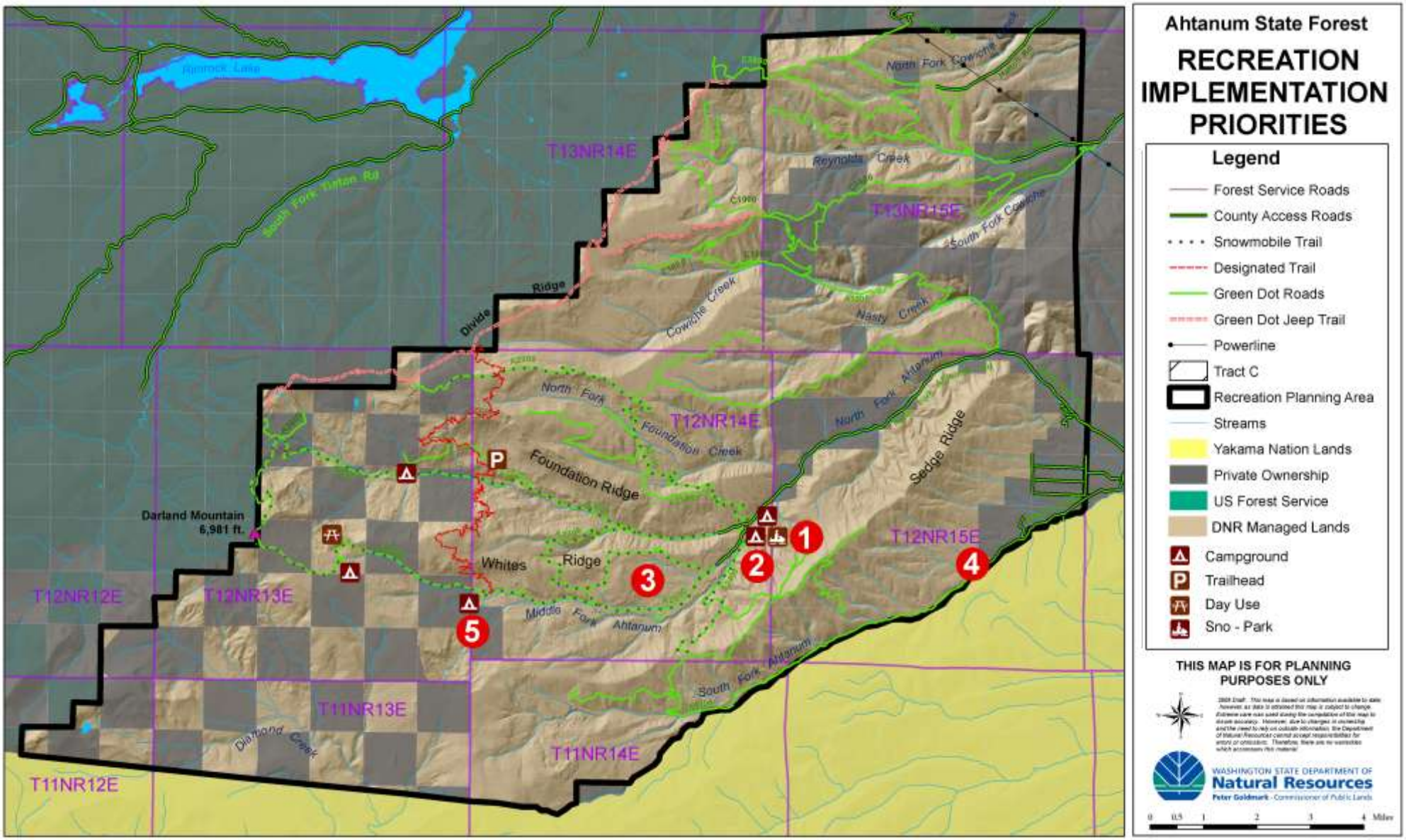
Capital Facility Sequencing

Pursue capital projects over the next 10 to15 years, depending on funding for maintenance, management, education, and enforcement, in the following sequence. (Figure 5):

Capital Projects

- **Capital Facility Project 1:** In the vicinity of the existing Ahtanum Trailhead, through facility expansion or new facility construction, provide a multi-use, dual-season trailhead that functions as non-motorized parking in the summer and provides recreation use in the winter. In addition, provide an interim parking area for motorized trail access until a permanent motorized trailhead is constructed at Middle Fork Road (see Trailhead Priority 5).
- **Capital Facility Project 2:** Provide additional designated camping opportunities by adding a new facility or expanding an existing facility. Consider the location of the historic West Valley Conservation Camp for walk-in and/or group camping.
- **Capital Facility Project 3***:* Define a designated motorized trail system, including a trailhead, in the area to the south of the North Fork of Ahtanum Creek with a link to the existing Grey Rock Trail.
- **Capital Facility Project 4:** Provide a South Fork Road trailhead facility for access to non-motorized trails and green dot roads.
- **Capital Facility Project 5:** Provide additional camping opportunities through expansion and/or redesign of Tree Phones campground including providing additional equestrian oriented campsites and facilities.

Figure 5. Priorities for implementing the recreation plan for Ahtanum State Forest. Numbers on map relate to capital facility project sequencing on the previous page.



Part II: Implementation

Implementation of the Ahtanum State Forest Recreation Plan will occur through development of the capital projects listed on the following pages as well as through ongoing management.

Capital Project List Ranked by Priority

A summary of the projects to be pursued follows. None of these projects have secure funding and all are based on obtaining funding in the future.

Table 2. Summary of funding priorities (grants and capital).

Funding Source	Project	Estimated Implementation Year *
Grants and Capital	Ahtanum Trailhead Design and Acquisition	2009
Grants and Capital	Ahtanum Trailhead Development Grant	2012 - 2013
Grants and Capital	Ahtanum Trailhead Construction	2013 - 2015
Grants and Capital	Ahtanum Campground Expansion Design and Acquisition Grant	2013-2014
Grants and Capital	Ahtanum Campground Expansion Development Grant and Construction	2015- 2017
Grants and Capital	Motorized Trail System Design and Acquisition Grant	2015 - 2016
Grants and Capital	Motorized Trail System Development Grant and Construction	2017 - 2020
Grants and Capital	South Fork Trailhead Design and Acquisition Grant	2019 – 2020
Grants and Capital	South Fork Trailhead Development Grant and Construction	2021- 2023
Grants and Capital	Tree Phones Campground Expansion Design and Acquisition Grant	2021 - 2022
Grants and Capital	Tree Phones Campground Expansion Development Grant and Construction	2023 - 2025

***** *Estimated implementation year is based on the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office Nonhighway and Off-road Vehicle Account grant funding cycle.*

Ongoing Management Implementation

Implementation of recreation management objectives and strategies is essential to the success of the plan. Ongoing management strategies are listed as follows.

Sustainable Funding

- Continue to apply for grant funding through the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) and explore additional grant opportunities.
- Work to educate the public regarding the costs associated with maintaining and operating existing trails and facilities.
- Pursue alternative funding sources for accomplishing plan objectives.
    - Submit a capital request for implementation of the Ahtanum Plan.

Partnership and Volunteer Coordination

- Form partnerships with citizen volunteers who can maintain trails, act as camp hosts, and provide an overall increased presence on the landscape.
- Pursue additional opportunities to partner with enforcement personnel from the U.S. Forest Service's Naches Ranger District, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Yakima County, and Yakima County Sheriff's Office.
- Increase educational opportunities by improving web-based resources that include maps of the area and recreation rules.
- Increase public awareness of the forest vision, trust mandate, and expected behaviors by encouraging volunteer participation for maintenance and planning, outreach to adjacent property owners, and user education.
- Pursue additional funding to increase education and enforcement staffing in the Ahtanum State Forest.
- Provide consistent signage that educates the public regarding allowed uses, existing regulations, campfire use, fire danger, and other applicable rules.
- Provide public information regarding the potential for private property trespass due to checkerboard land ownership.

Trail Management

- Work with user groups to support the development of the William O. Douglas trail system and look for opportunities to link trails.
- Encourage Ahtanum recreation user participation on the green dot road committee.
- Work with landowners to acquire long-term public access easements, rights-of-way, or other access mechanisms that meet the needs of private landowners, DNR, and the recreating public.

- Continue to provide consistent maps, signs, education, and enforcement for the green dot road system.
- Manage the green dot road system to allow alternative routing, if possible or necessary, during forest management activities.
- Work cooperatively with Washington State Parks to continue to provide winter recreation and snowmobiling opportunities that are consistent with land management.
- Continue to work with local user groups in the event that snowmobile routes are closed for safety purposes such as heavy truck traffic or maintenance.
- Pursue opportunities with user groups to consider addressing the development of additional winter shelters for snowmobile users.
- Provide signage that promotes cooperative use of trails by different recreation use types.

Dispersed Recreation

- Focus dispersed camping in areas away from designated campgrounds such as the north forks of Ahtanum and Cowiche creeks and in locations that are environmentally compatible.
- Explore the concept of establishing designated areas that allow for dispersed camping.
- Explore opportunities to provide designated target shooting areas.

Part III. Planning Process

The *Ahtanum State Forest Recreation Plan* was created from the dedication, effort, and ideas of knowledgeable people from diverse backgrounds. Public input was a key component and the first step in developing the plan. The public also helped form the Ahtanum recreation plan by attending public meetings; participating in the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) review process; collecting trail data; contributing suggestions via DNR's Web site, e-mail, phone calls and letters; and guiding the course of the planning effort through the Ahtanum Recreation Plan Work Group.

DNR incorporated these valuable insights, suggestions and ideas to produce the plan. This collaborative process has yielded a plan that meets DNR's requirements under the trust mandate, addresses environmental responsibilities, and provides for continued public access and enjoyment of the Ahtanum State Forest.

Developing the Ahtanum State Forest Recreation Plan

The process to develop this plan took place in the following seven phases.

Phase 1. Pre-Planning

- Develop project scope.
- Identify data collection needs.
- Create a stakeholder involvement plan.

Phase 2. Recreation Land Suitability

- Identify and map areas with long-term limiting factors for recreational use.

Phase 3. Inventory and Public Involvement

- Identify public issues and concerns.
- Hold public meeting.
- Establish recreation planning committee.
- Conduct field inventory.
- Begin user survey.

Phase 4. Assessment

- Evaluate data and discuss issues and opportunities with planning committee.
- Complete compiling the user survey data.
- Develop preliminary concepts for recreation management.

Phase 5. Alternatives

- Refine recreation concepts into one recommended plan.
- Develop objectives and strategies and implementation strategy for the proposed plan.
- Complete a draft write-up of the plan.

Phase 6. SEPA Review

- Conduct the SEPA for the project.
- Edit and format the plan for publication.

Phase 7. Plan completion

- DNR adopts the plan.

Recreation Land Suitability

This project included a suitability assessment of the recreation lands in Ahtanum. The purpose of the assessment was to identify and map areas within the planning area that have long-term limiting factors that affect recreation planning. The suitability assessment is broad scale in nature and is not intended to replace future site-specific analysis for individual projects.

The assessment resulted in four composite maps that helped to guide the recreation planning effort (Figures 6-9). The composite maps identify areas that have been ranked as either low or moderate suitability for locating recreation facilities, motorized trails, non motorized trails (equestrian and mountain bike), and/or hiking trails.

Planners, scientists, geographic information systems (GIS) analysts, and land managers were involved in developing the suitability maps. The process included identifying and mapping biologic, soils/geologic, and management criteria within the planning area. These criteria included: wetlands, wetland buffers, riparian areas, streams, fish habitat, floodplains, landslide information, slope steepness, highly erodible soils, shrub-steppe habitat, talus and cliff habitats, deer/elk summer and winter ranges, communication sites, rock sources, utility lines and roads, areas with special management designations, adjacent private lands, known cultural/archaeological sites, and sensitive, threatened and/or endangered species.

Individual data layers were mapped separately first and then overlaid into composite maps. The resulting four composite suitability maps were used by the work group and staff as they developed recreation management recommendations for the planning area. The suitability information was a fundamental piece of the planning process. However, other planning factors were considered, such as public demand, data from user surveys, road access, and long-term funding potential (see Public Involvement section).

Figure 6. Recreation land suitability—summer recreation facilities

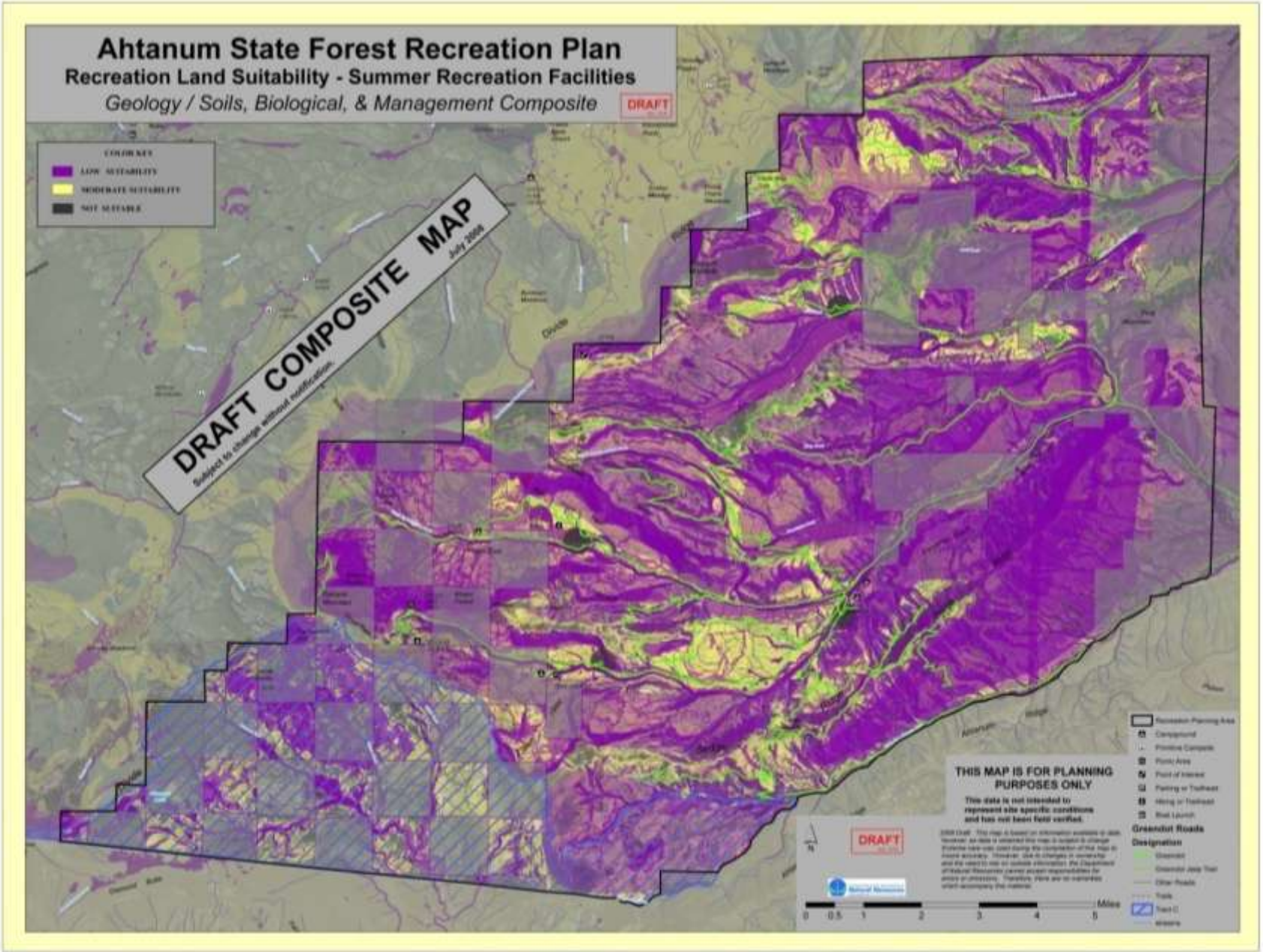


Figure 7. Recreation land suitability—hiking trails

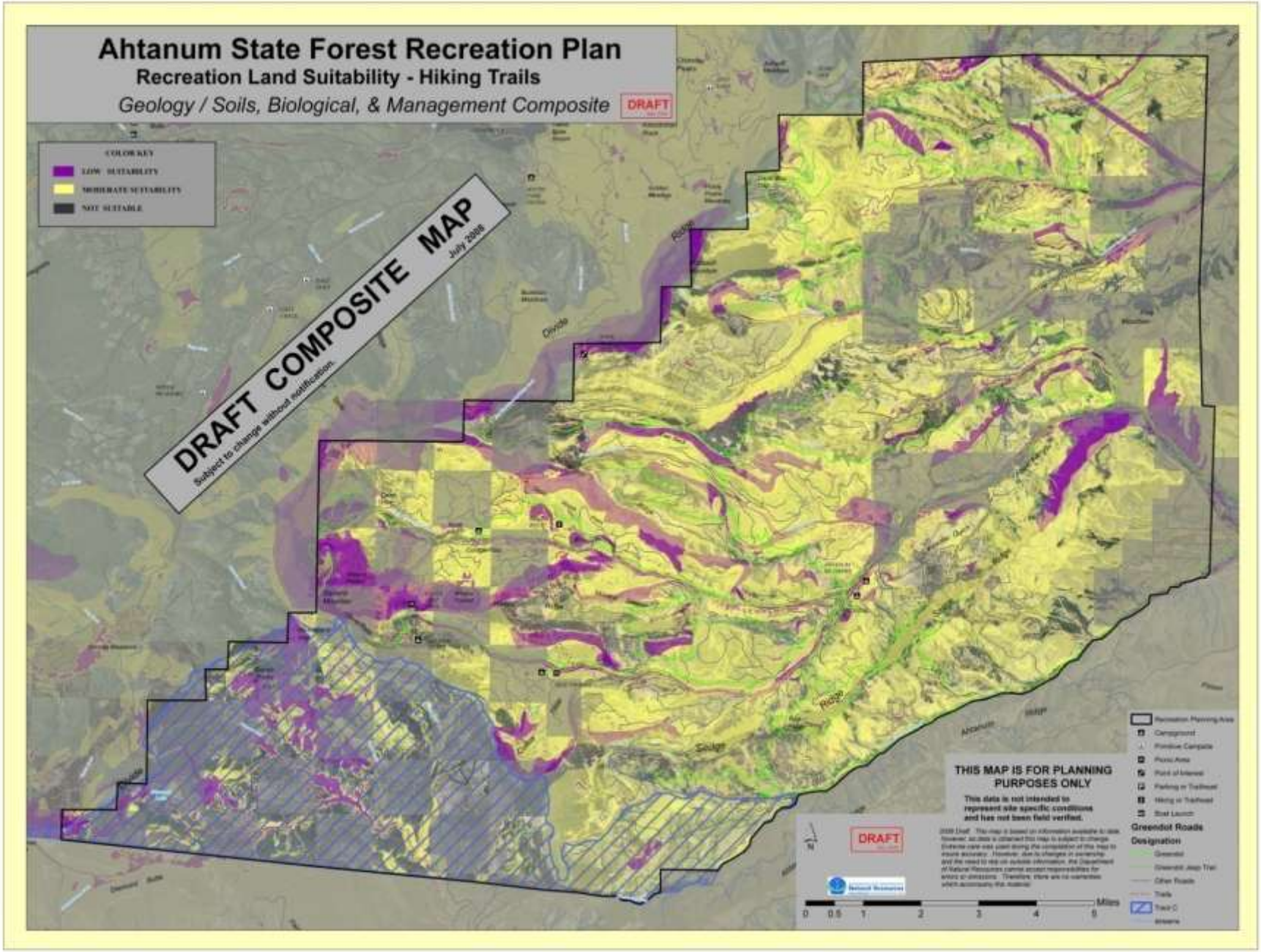


Figure 8. Recreation land suitability—summer non-motorized trails

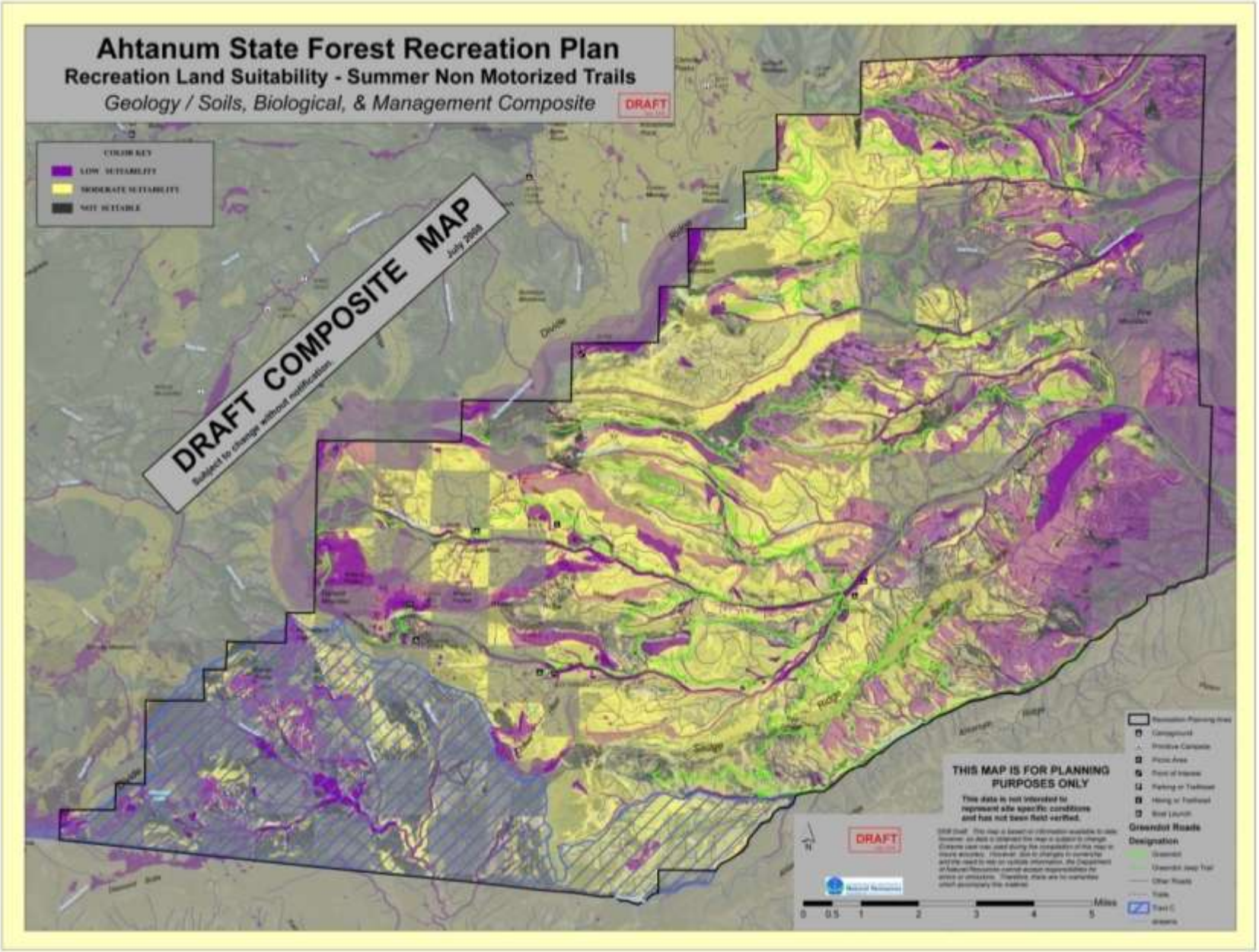
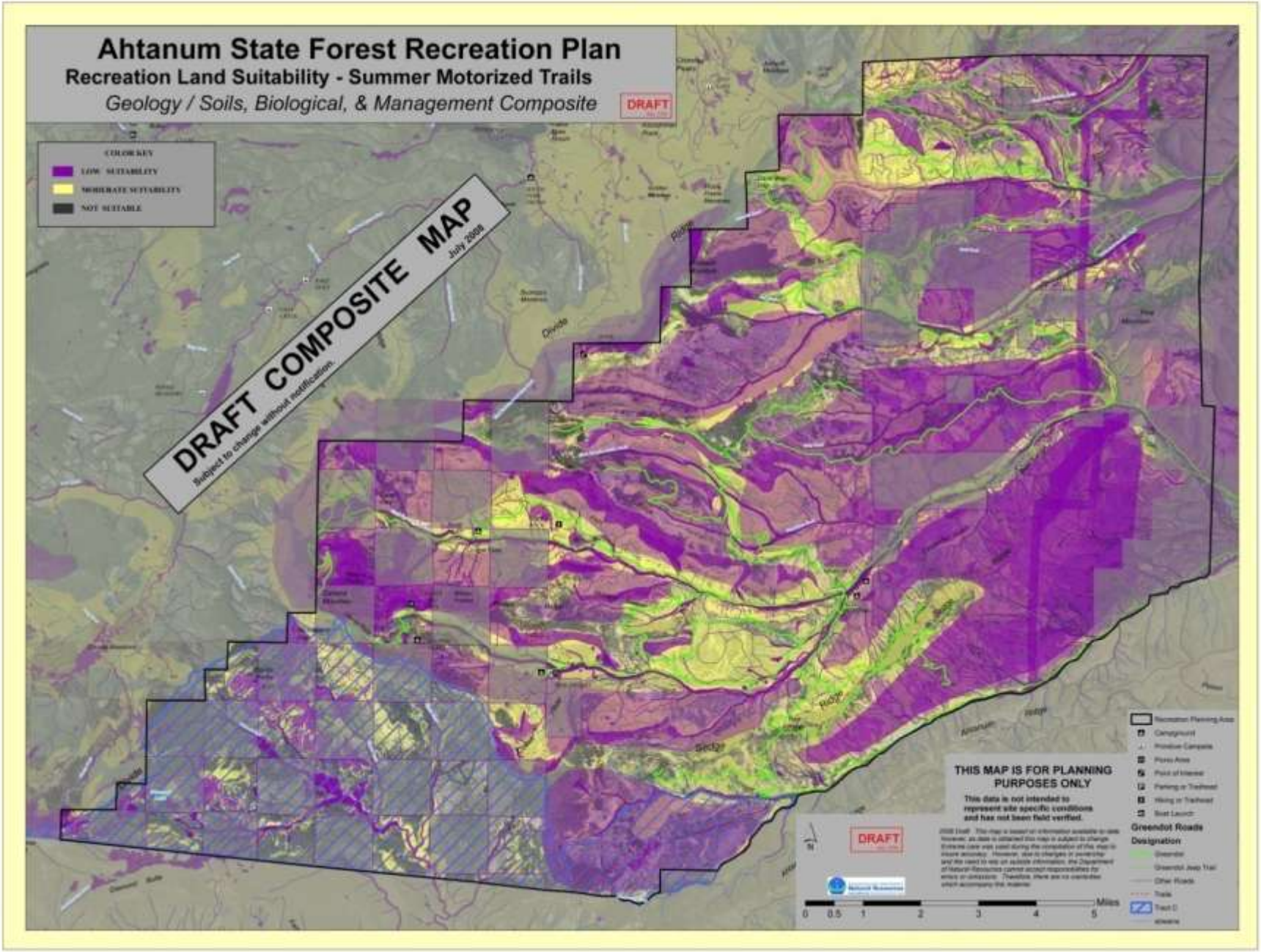


Figure 9. Recreation land suitability—summer motorized trails



Public Involvement

Public participation in the planning process was an integral part of creating this plan. The outreach process included five main components:

- A public "kick-off" meeting to introduce the project and collect public input.
- Formation of a citizen work group to discuss challenges and recommend improvements within the forest.
- External information gathering from a variety of sources, including the green dot road committee and local recreation user groups.
- Creation of a web page to provide general information on the planning process and solicit comments.
- Distribution of a web-based survey to assess user patterns, concerns, and overall impressions of Ahtanum State Forest.

Public "Kick-Off" Meeting

DNR began gathering public feedback at an open house on February 11, 2008. Approximately 100 people attended the meeting who, in addition to learning about DNR's role as a land manager, were encouraged to respond to the following four questions:

- What do you enjoy about the Ahtanum State Forest?
- What opportunities are there for recreation in the Ahtanum State Forest?
- What challenges do you see for recreation in the Ahtanum State Forest?
- What are some suggestions to help recreation in the Ahtanum State Forest blend with forest management and wildlife concerns?

Attendees at the open house were invited to participate as members of the Ahtanum Recreation Plan Work Group. Applications for work group participation were distributed at the meeting and through the mail. DNR staff also provided information about additional avenues for participation, including how to submit general comments to the Southeast Region office, volunteering to assist in collecting data for the trail inventory, and formal comment opportunities provided as part of the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) review process.

Ahtanum Recreation Plan Work Group

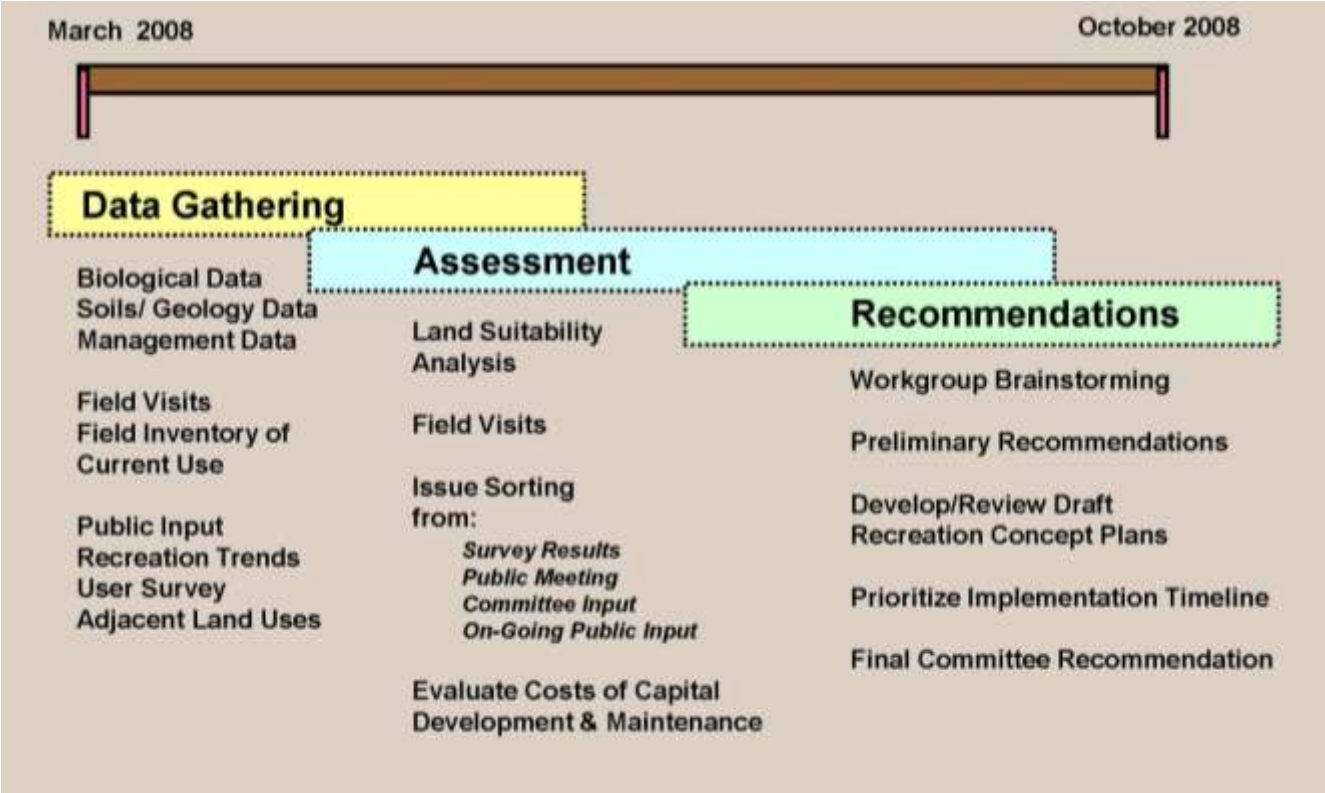
The Ahtanum Recreation Plan Work Group (work group) began meeting in March 2008. The work group's mission was to provide insight and input to help DNR make decisions related to recreation management and to work with DNR staff to develop draft recreation management recommendations. Each work group member committed to attending eight monthly meetings and participating in two field visits.

In creating the work group, DNR sought members from diverse interests and backgrounds. The work group included representatives of 4x4, ATV and motorcycle use; equestrian use; snowmobile and winter sports use; hiking; hunting; and fishing interests; a conservationist; a wildlife biologist

from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife; a representative from Ahtanum Irrigation District; and a neighboring private landowner.

The work group meetings served a dual purpose. First, they provided DNR and the members with a forum to relate and explain the various recreation interests in the Ahtanum. Second, DNR educated work group members about environmental and trust issues that are key to making any decisions about DNR-managed lands. Work group members learned about DNR's trust mandate, environmental responsibilities and funding limitations and offered recommendations for managing recreation in the Ahtanum State Forest based on these factors. Work group members conveyed information to and from the groups they represented. The work group's recommendations reflect a strong understanding of DNR's regulatory and trust obligations and, therefore, have a better opportunity of being funded and constructed.

Figure 10. Ahtanum State Forest Recreation Planning—Work Group process



Web page

DNR created a web page for the Ahtanum recreation planning process that included maps of the area, a description of the planning process, project updates, and the opportunity to submit email comments. The web page assisted work group members in their public outreach and served to inform the general public regarding the planning process.

User Survey

DNR conducted a web-based survey of recreation practices in Ahtanum to gather additional information from a broad spectrum of recreation users. While valuable information was gathered during this survey, it is important to note that the survey was not randomly sampled and is not scientifically representative of a larger population. Survey results are included in the appendix.

Field Data Collection and Mapping

DNR staff conducted an inventory of existing user-built trails. Volunteers and a Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) work crew used Global Positioning System (GPS) units to collect and record trail locations. These locations were mapped and shared with the work group.

Part IV. Background Information

Legal Rules, Policies, and Plans

DNR is required to comply with local, state, and federal law. Key components of the legal and policy framework that apply to recreation on DNR-managed trust lands include:

- **The Multiple Use Act** (Chapter 79.10.100 RCW). This 1971 legislation directs DNR to allow recreational use on trust uplands. Recreational use must be consistent with applicable trust provisions. (apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=79.10.100)

- **The Policy for Sustainable Forests (PSF).** Adopted in June 2006, this policy document directs DNR to conserve and enhance natural systems and resources on forested state trust lands. The PSF includes specific policies that apply to recreation and public access. (www.dnr.wa.gov/ResearchScience/Topics/StateTrustLandsForestManagement/Pages/policy_for_sustainable_forests.aspx)

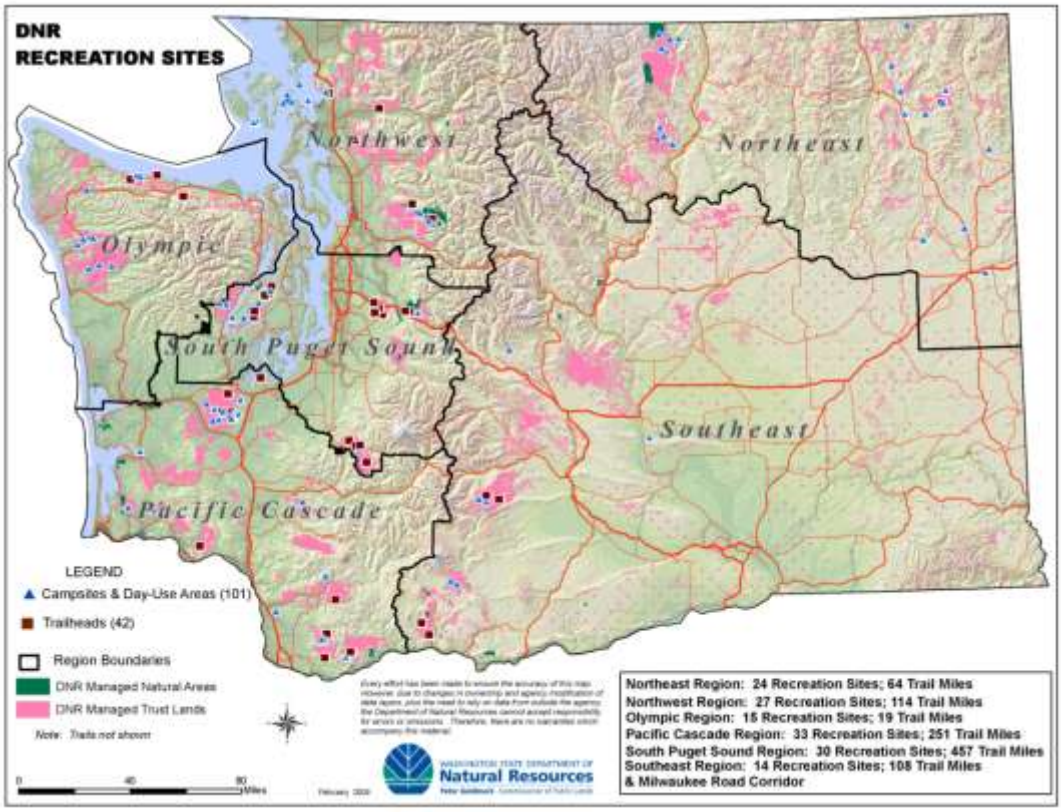
- **DNR Trust Lands Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP).** Adopted in 1997**,** this long-term land management plan, authorized under Section 10 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA), is intended to protect threatened and endangered species. The HCP allows timber harvesting and other management activities, including recreation, to continue while providing for species conservation. (www.dnr.wa.gov/ResearchScience/Topics/TrustLandsHCP/Pages/trust_lands_hcp.aspx)

- **Recreation Program—Southeast Inventory and Assessment (RIA).** Adopted by DNR in 2008, the RIA provides a detailed inventory and assessment of public use and recreation on DNR-managed trust lands in Southeast Region. The RIA identifies existing public use conditions and provides context for the issues affecting the region's recreation program.

Statewide Recreation on DNR-managed Lands

Across the state, DNR's recreation program maintains and operates 143 recreation sites and more than 1,000 miles of trail (Figure 11). Some sites and trails are designated for only motorized or non-motorized use; many are multiple use, including mountain biking, horseback riding, hiking, and off-road vehicles (ORV). Many forest roads on trust lands provide motorized and non-motorized access to designated trails and also provide access for dispersed recreation activities such as hunting, fishing and sightseeing.

Figure 11. Recreation sites on DNR-managed land.



DNR's unique recreation niche

DNR's recreation facilities complement those offered by other agencies across the state by filling a niche that many other recreation providers do not provide. Other agencies may require fees for using their facilities. In contrast, DNR's recreation facilities are considered primitive and are typically available on a first-come, first-served, no-fee basis. In providing primitive facilities, DNR offers recreation users a natural experience with limited amenities—typically, no electrical services, sewage dumps, flush toilets, or showers are available. Some DNR facilities provide access to drinking or stock-use water.

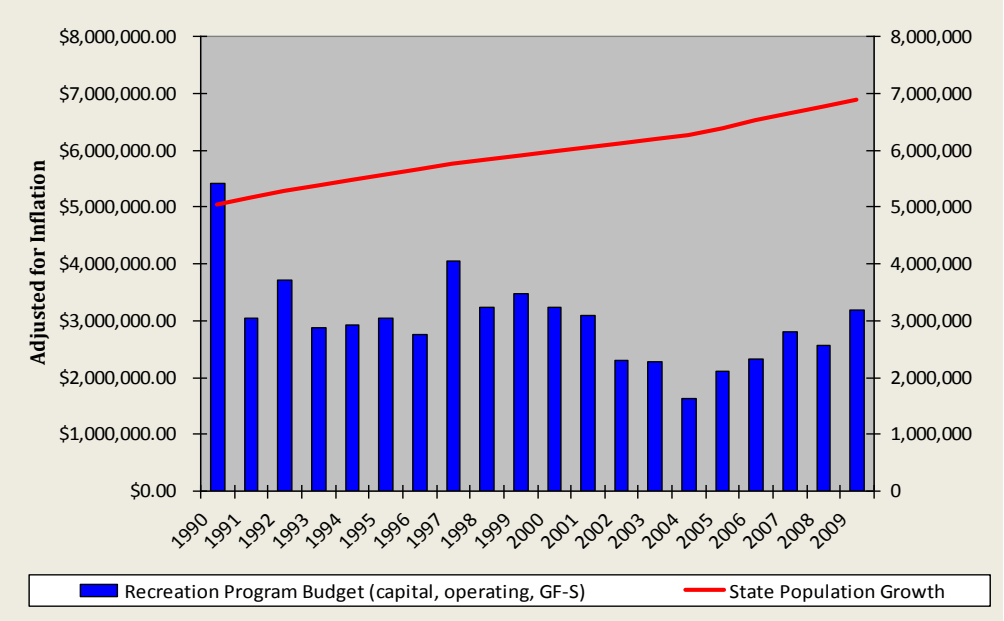
Other agencies that provide recreation in Washington State include: U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA); U.S. Forest Service (USFS); the National Park Service; and state agencies, such as the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and Washington State Parks. In addition, some utility districts provide recreation opportunities to the public.

Increased recreation use; decreased funding over time

As is the case with other state programs and agencies, DNR's recreation program has experienced budget cuts during the past few years. The result is reduced staff levels, reduced level of service at some facilities, and fewer capital improvement projects. At the same time, the number of visitors to DNR-managed trust lands has increased throughout the state. Rapidly

expanding urban and suburban areas have made DNR lands closer and more accessible to larger numbers of people.

Figure 12. Rate of population growth in Washington compared to funding for DNR's recreation program.



Funding for recreation

DNR receives its recreation funding from several different sources:

1. A large portion comes from the Nonhighway and Off-Road Vehicle Activities (NOVA) Program. This is revenue collected from the state gasoline tax.
2. A small portion of the budget comes from the state's General Fund, which are general tax dollars appropriated to DNR by the state legislature to manage recreation.
3. A third source of funding comes from grants offered by organizations such as the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO).
4. A fourth source is funding received from DNR's management funds.
5. Volunteer hours serve as an important funding source that can be used to provide matching dollars for grants.

DNR applies for many grants each year to help fund recreation maintenance, improvements, education, and enforcement. DNR relies on grants for one-third of the funding for routine maintenance of existing recreation sites and trails. However, grant funding is not guaranteed; the recreation program must compete on a project-by-project basis against other state and federal agencies and private organizations.

An additional challenge comes from rapidly evolving recreation technology. The majority of DNR facilities and trails were constructed in the 1970s and designed for traditional uses such as camping, horseback riding, hiking and motorcycle use. Since then, recreational equipment has evolved and improved. For example, horse trailers have become larger, four-wheel-drive vehicles provide accessibility to areas that are further afield, and recreation vehicles (RVs) and large trailers account for much of the camping use that occurs. New types of recreation use have evolved as well. For example, ATV use and mountain-bike riding have different trail and facility design needs to provide the type of experience desired by these users.

Region Context and Description

DNR is organized into six geographic regions. Ahtanum State Forest is located in the Southeast Region, which covers more than 43 percent of the state, making it DNR's largest region. The region consists of 15 counties with more than 970,000 acres of DNR-managed agricultural, forest, aquatic and range lands. The region's headquarters is located in Ellensburg.

The major population centers in the region are the cities of Yakima, the Tri-Cities (Kennewick, Pasco, and Richland), Walla Walla, Wenatchee, and Ellensburg. The principal interstate highway access routes are Interstate 90 and Interstate 82. Although vast portions of Southeast Region are sparsely populated, almost one-third of the region's population lives in Yakima and the Tri-Cities area. DNR lands in the region have historically attracted campers, hunters, equestrians, off-road vehicle users, snowmobilers, and the recreating public in general. Levels of use have increased over time and are expected to continue to rise.

Recreation in the Region

Southeast Region manages recreation on remote forestlands, as well as on lands closer to urban areas. In addition to the Ahtanum State Forest, popular recreation forest blocks in the region include the L.T. Murray Wildlife Management Area, Naneum Ridge State Forest, Colockum, Stemilt, Barbeque Flats in the Wenas area, Beverly Dunes, Island Camp and Bird Creek in the Glenwood block, Buck Creek in the Husum area, and the Milwaukee Road Corridor. Dispersed recreation occurs throughout the region.

Developed and designated recreation facilities in Southeast Region include:

- Five trailheads
- Eight campgrounds
- One vista point
- 23 miles of multiple-use trails and 25 miles of non-motorized trails
- Green dot roads
- Groomed winter snowmobile and cross-country ski trails

Green Dot Road System

The green dot road system was developed to address the checkerboard land ownership pattern in Southeast Region. This system is a cooperative road management network developed in conjunction with DNR, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), and private owners. The system uses maps, reader boards, and route markers with green dots to indicate when a road is open to the public for motorized use.

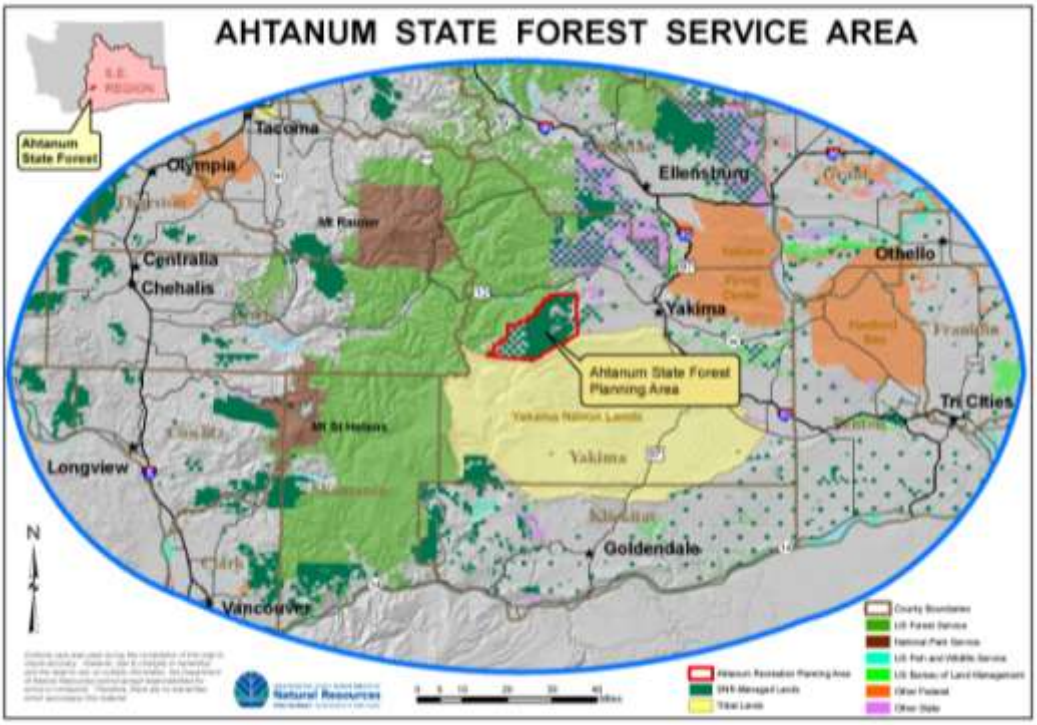
Green dot signs on private property indicate that the property owner has permitted DNR and WDFW to allow public access through their land. Participation in the green dot road system is entirely voluntary, and private property owners can opt to deny public access at any time if no formal public access easement has been granted to DNR. Roads that are included in the green dot system will change and shift over time, both on private, public, and DNR-managed lands. These updates will reflect changes in forest management, maintenance issues, habitat protection, and other land management factors.

The Green Dot Committee is a group of land owners, managers, and local volunteers representing different recreation activities. The committee provides a forum for updating recreation users on DNR management decisions related to the road system, as well as a way for DNR to receive public input. The committee was formed in the mid 1990s and meets periodically throughout the year.

Where do visitors to Ahtanum come from?

The primary service area for the Ahtanum State Forest includes Benton, Kittitas and Yakima counties. However, based on 2008 survey data, more than 30 percent of recreation visitors come from the west side of the Cascades. Staff observation and campground surveys suggest that this percentage may be even higher. The area of origin for recreation visits to Ahtanum is shown on Figure 13.

Figure 13. Ahtanum State Forest service area



Surrounding area

The Ahtanum State Forest area provides opportunities for multiple recreation uses. It is bordered along the length of its western boundary by the Wenatchee National Forest, which is managed by the U.S. Forest Service out of its Naches office. Many Forest Service trails and roads begin and ultimately connect to the Ahtanum jeep trail and green dot road system. The forest service provides eight managed campgrounds and five dispersed camping areas to the north of the planning area along Highway 12.

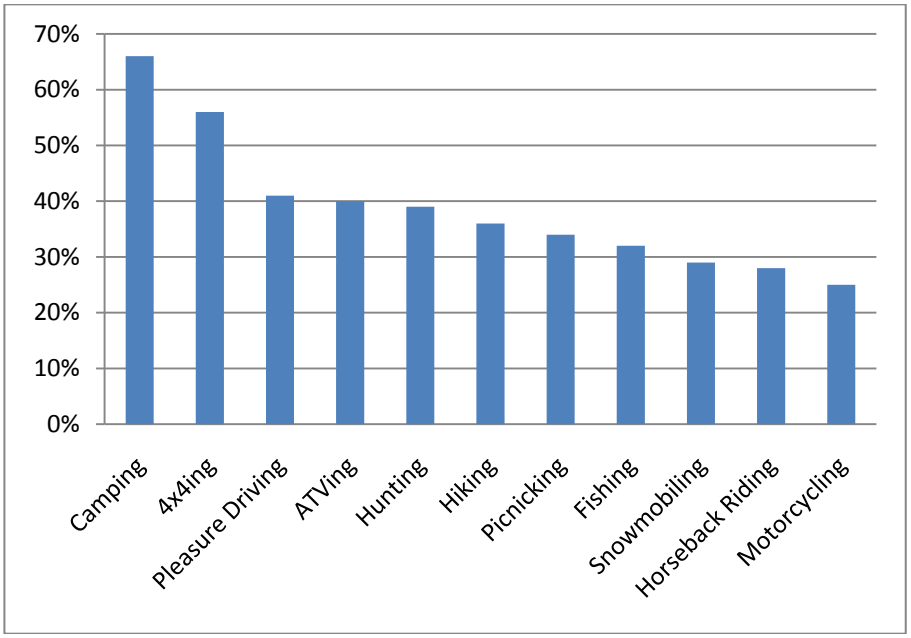
The popular 613 jeep trail (Figure 3), which is connected to the green dot road system, runs along Divide Ridge on the northwest boundary of the Ahtanum and runs through both Forest Service and DNR ownership. As the name implies, Divide Ridge provides a distinct topographical separation between Ahtanum State Forest and U.S. Forest Service land.

No objective data exists related to recreation use originating from Forest Service land. However, input from recreation users, especially motorized and equestrian users, suggests that the levels of recreational use in the Ahtanum are influenced by proximity to Wenatchee National Forest. The location of the 613 trail and its shared management by DNR, Ahtanum Irrigation District, and the Forest Service presents an opportunity for coordinated planning, especially in regard to motorized recreation use.

APPENDIX: Summary of 2008 Recreation Survey

Types of recreation in Ahtanum State Forest
Survey results indicate that individual users participate in multiple recreation uses. For example, 4x4 users may camp and also use snowmobiles in the winter. Figure A-1 shows the most popular activities.

Figure A-1. Popular recreation uses in Ahtanum State Forest. *(Source: 2008 online survey by DNR's Recreation Program.)*



Frequency of use:
- 46 percent of all respondents use Ahtanum State Forest on a monthly basis and 31 percent on a weekly basis.
- 22 percent use the forest once a year.

Time of visit:
- Weekends are the most popular time to visit the forest, although 38 percent of respondents also use the forest during the week.
- More than 72 percent of respondents use the forest in the spring, summer and fall – 41 percent use the forest in the winter.

Length of visit:
- 52 percent of respondents typically stay and camp in the forest for two or more days.
- 39 percent of respondents stay for a full day but not overnight

Average drive time:

- Average drive time was divided equally.
  - 20 percent traveled 16 to 30 miles.
  - 20 percent traveling 31 to 50 miles.
  - 20 percent driving 51 to 100 miles.
  - 20 percent driving 101 to 200 miles.

Types of recreation amenities needed in the forest:

- Trail maps (63%)
- Maintained trails (50%)
- Campsites (39%)

Greatest concerns in Ahtanum State Forest:

- Garbage dumping (54%)
- Limited number of trail miles (46%)
- Limited connector/loop trails (42%)

Willingness to pay a fee:

- 64 percent of respondents that they were willing to pay a fee to visit Ahtanum State Forest.