

Comparing the two plans (Concept D and Concept E), I prefer parts of Concept E, but not all of it.

The part I like about Concept E is the non-motorized trail system on Stewart Mountain, north of Lake Whatcom Park. I live near this area and I frequently hike the poorly-maintained and but beautiful trails in this zone. I appreciate that the Whatcom Backcountry Horsemen have done a lot of work in this area, but they could use help maintaining other parts of this forest that are well-suited to hiking on foot or mountain biking, but less accessible to horses. The heavy use of horses in this region makes it a good candidate for additional non-motorized uses (that mix well with horseback activities). Specifically, I like the proposal to move the trailhead further into the forest, instead of the current trailhead along Y Road. This would make it easier for hikers to reach the higher elevations and the nice views from this hillside.

The part I don't like about Concept E is the large area in the northern part of the county dedicated to motorized recreation. I don't live near that area, so those uses won't impact me directly, but it means I would probably never bother to go explore those mountains. If some of those areas on Sumas or Red Mountain were designated for non-motorized use, it's more likely that's I'd go up there and enjoy them once in a while.

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I am a resident of the Foothills area in Maple Falls. I live here because I value the peace and quiet of this rural area, and the beauty and human-powered recreational activities of the area.

I am strongly opposed to any plan that includes any type of motorized vehicle activity. My reasons:

1. Noise pollution. This is a peaceful, quiet area. Noisy motorized vehicles creating noise pollution are anathema to this area.
2. Climate Pollution. At a time when Washington State and Whatcom County are striving to reduce our region's carbon footprint, it would be perverse and irresponsible to implement any plan that encourages more carbon-fuel consumption and ozone-depleting emissions. It would appear to be an example of one hand of government not knowing what the other is doing.
3. Fire Danger. It is indisputable that climate change in our region and other factors have substantially increased the wildfire risk. Presence of motorized vehicles in forested areas increase this risk. We have seen the reality of this danger as recently as last summer when a wildfire occurred near my residence, and was thought to be due to ORV-related spark. It is not realistic to expect that regulations requiring spark arrest on vehicles can be reinforced due to the limited number of enforcement personnel. The ORV community has demonstrated repeatedly their flagrant disregard for regulations as they regularly operate their vehicles in areas where this activity is prohibited near my home.
4. Degradation of environment. Anyone who doubts that environmental degradation is a consequence of ORV use in the forest only has to tour the Foothills areas where illegal ORV use occurs. You will see destruction of the ecosystem as well as litter.
5. Lack of county support: The Whatcom County Council declined to consider zoning modifications to allow ORV use in areas where it is clearly forbidden. It would be inappropriate and illustrate the worst aspects of state government if DNR pursues this option when our County Council has made a clear statement denying support. Does the DNR really want to ride roughshod over the wishes of our county governance?
6. Not the wishes of the outdoor community. Studies have shown that a large majority of outdoor recreation users in this area wish to pursue non-motorized forms of activity. ORV use, by virtue of noise and the other factors mentioned above, will discourage these recreation users from coming to hike, walk, bicycle and other human-powered activities. Why would we want to discourage and degrade the outdoor activities of the majority of users of the outdoors in our area? The overall effect of allowing ORV use is likely to be negative on the region economy which is so dependent on the muscle-users.

For these reasons, and others, ORV use in our forested areas is not something that we should encourage in this area.

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Thank you for organizing the latest public meetings in Kendall and Bellingham last month. Following are my comments on your proposed plans.

My primary source of exercise is outdoor recreation, and I primarily recreate by mountain biking on trails in public lands. I've been doing this a long time, and it is an important activity that I do with

friends, my adult kids, and hopefully can continue doing with my grandkids. As a resident of Whatcom County, living in Bellingham, with easy access to the Baker/Bellingham corridor along highway 542, the lack of recreational multi-use trails on this large expanse of DNR-managed land is very disappointing. The number of user-built non-designated trails in this region is very strongly indicative of the public pressure for a large multi-use trail system accessible from highway 542.

It's very encouraging to see the DNR reach out to the community to assess the need for trail in the area. Specifically I would like to see official designation of the existing non-designated trail systems

in North Fork and Middle Fork of the Nooksack, as well as the Mirror Lake and Stewart Mountain areas that will be able to connect into the future trail network in the new Lake Whatcom county park. The existing non-designated trail networks in these areas should allow the DNR to quickly and cost-effectively develop trail networks, with a minimal amount of work to bring them to appropriate trail standards.

While it's difficult to forecast ahead, I also believe the local financial benefit of a large multi-use trail system on DNR lands in the Baker/Bellingham corridor will be huge, both to businesses and community individuals generally. I'm a small business owner in Bellingham, and my business happens to be centered around trail building and the recreational trail community. There are dozens, if not hundreds of success stories nationally that demonstrate how well-planned and managed trail systems benefit communities like Deming, Maple Falls, and Glacier, not to mention Bellingham and the surrounding areas.

One final comment, regarding the Murrelet Conservation Strategy. I am not a biologist and certainly don't understand the issues surrounding the Murrelet. Based on the little bit I've read it seems that virtually nothing is known regarding how low-impact, narrow, natural-tread single-track trails affect Murrelets. While it's possible to speculate on how human activity at trail heads, regarding the potential for trash to attract Murrelet predators, it seems speculation at best and is a negative activity that can easily be managed. And trail heads can certainly be located with an eye towards their potential predator attraction effects.

But it seems unreasonable to limit single-track trails due to Murrelet concerns, when there is nothing to indicate that such trails have any negative impact on Murrelet habitat or health. The concept of restricting recreational single-track trails based on "future nesting habitat potential" is even more ludicrous, exceeding any normal or sane consideration for habitat conservation.

I am in favor of Alternatives B or E in the presented plans, although I'm hopeful for further trail expansion into the areas currently reserved as "potential future" Murrelet nesting habitat.

Thanks for your hard work and for your consideration of adding more designated multi-use single-track trails into a place in dire need of them.

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After the county council turned down the Doc It from DNR proposal. I started wondering what ordinance, codes or state laws have that allows Whatcom County their rights to only State Trusted Lands for just Timber sales and nothing else, why does the State Trusted Lands in Whatcom County not allow for recreation?

Any information on ordinances or codes or state laws that allow Whatcom County rights to supersede Washington State.

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I am writing to express my support for mountain biking in state forests in Whatcom County. My family and I greatly enjoy mountain biking and would love to see our recreation opportunities expanded into new areas.

We support mountain bike access to the North Fork and Middle Fork of the Nooksack, Mirror Lake, and Stewart Mountain areas. We also support assessment of pre-existing trails to expedite trail construction in these areas.

In regard to the Marbled Murrelet Conservation plan, I believe non-motorized trails are compatible with the conservation strategy.

Conversely, we do not support ORV trails and motorized recreation in the plan. ORV use drives out other user groups, resulting in disproportionate allocation of resources to a very small segment of the population.

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I'm writing this letter to express my desire to have legal Mountain Biking available in these areas of Whatcom County. The North Fork of the Nooksack, Middle Fork of the Nooksack and the Mirror Lake and Stewart Mountain areas (connecting into Lake Whatcom Park). I also enjoy using these area with my family as it allows us to recreate outdoors and enjoy nature.

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I am an avid mountain biker as well as with my family and dog, an avid hiker. I've recently become aware that your planning for this area is honing in on a plan. I've looked at Plans D & E on your website and prefer Plan D mostly because it limits motorized vehicle use to

one area. I don't favor denying all access for motorized users, but to be honest it is more destructive to the environment (both physical and noise) than non-motorized users. I also favor limiting trail density for all areas so that non-motorized trails don't consume wild spaces.

I haven't been to a meeting yet, so I don't know everything that has been discussed, but one of the biggest issue I see is the proliferation of ad-hoc trail heads where there are no real bonafide trail heads. Putting in real trail heads will relieve pressures on surrounding private properties because people will not be searching for how to get access.

Another thing I'd really like considered is trail head placements that allow people, most likely bikers, to chain together several areas into a loop or just allow longer rides that include both road and trail.

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I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the proposal for a motorized trail system on Red Mountain in Deming. I was born and raised in Bellingham and my husband and I just bought a 5 acre property on Red Mountain in hopes of enjoying the beauty and peace and quiet of the mountain for years to come. We moved here a week ago and just learned of the proposal. I have to say my heart is in my throat. I've dreamed of being a land owner my whole life and as this dream becomes a reality, the possibility of the noise as well as the environmental impacts of a motorized trail system on this mountain we love so much is unthinkable. That said, I'm a trail user myself, since we hike and ride horses, and I can understand the desire to enjoy nature in many different ways. The idea of having access to more of this beautiful place is tempting and, in my opinion, the cost is too high. So few places are left where the natural world is allowed to remain untouched, and I ask that it not be disturbed. As we are slowly meeting the friendly neighboring families who share this space with us, I have to believe they would share my opinion. Please protect our home.

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I was unable to attend either of the public meetings on this topic. I'm an avid mountain biker and the areas I'd like to see mountain bike access to include:

The North Fork of the Nooksack, Middle Fork of the Nooksack and the Mirror Lake and Stewart Mountain areas (connecting into Lake Whatcom Park).

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This regards the Baker to Bellingham Recreation proposal. Given that the Whatcom County Council has correctly removed your troubling proposal from the docket, can the members of the east county community assume the following:

1. That your working committee will be re-constituted to accurately reflect the interests of the east county communities (Columbia neighborhood, Foothills, South Fork Valley, Maple Falls, Glacier, etc) rather than the distorted interests of the motorized community which, regrettably, has been weighted heavily toward non-Whatcom County members?
  2. That the March 13 and April 10 meetings in Whatcom County will now move forward with a discussion of non-motorized recreational park development which has, from the beginning, been the more substantial concern of Whatcom County residents?
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Plan D looks very attractive for my preferred Spring to Fall recreational activities of hiking and mountain biking. Although I love Galbraith Mountain, it is a challenge to entice novice and younger riders (and slightly older ones - I'm 53 and recently got back into trail riding) family members and friends to join in. It's a lot of uphill work before one can enjoy the thrill of the descent. An area with more world-class cross country trails and /or shuttle capabilities is possible and needed in the county.

I'm a 4th(+) generation County resident with a desire to continue to reside close to where I can continue to recreate, but I often head out of the area (Bend, OR, Squamish, Whistler, Winthrop) to partake in this form of riding. Silver Lake and East of Lake Whatcom are possibly good locations to develop further for this.

I've been to two of the community meetings and applaud the DNR's process of seeking resident input. Although I hate to see the influx of so many people into our once sleepy corner, I do welcome the idea of doing everything to make this absolutely one of the best places to live to keep it a vibrant community.