



August 28, 2017

Joe Neal, District Ranger
 Attention: Lake Serene Temporary Closure
 Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest
 2930 Wetmore Ave., Suite 3A
 Everett, WA 98201

Submitted by email to:
comments-pacificnorthwest-mtbaker-snoqualmie-skykomish@fs.fed.us

RE: Scoping Comments on the proposed temporary Closure Order for the Lake Serene and Bridal Veil Falls Trailhead and Trail.

Dear District Ranger Neal:

As conservation and recreation organizations which represent tens of thousands of members who value the incredible recreational opportunities on the Mt. Baker Snoqualmie National Forest, we are writing in response to the public comment period relating to the proposed temporary closure order for the Lake Serene and Bridal Veil Falls Trail.

The 2017 State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan states that 84% of Washingtonians use trails each year. Much of this recreation takes place on Washington’s public lands, including the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest, which is one of the most visited national forests in the country. Only an hour’s drive from Seattle, the old growth forests and alpine lakes are a big draw for visitors year round.

The Forest should work to protect the significant and valuable investments that have been made in the recreational infrastructure that attract so many visitors.

We are concerned about potential impacts to the incredible and popular recreation experience on these two trails. On average 45,000 users hike the Lake Serene and Bridal Veil Falls Trail, making it an incredibly popular destination for families, youth, visitors and local residents.

Our organizations respect private landowners authority over their property, including the right to conduct timber harvest. To be clear, there is no timber harvest planned on national forest land. We also understand that our national forests have an obligation to allow for reasonable access to private inholdings, as appears to be the case in this situation.

However, the adjacent private land owner is requesting to use the lower part of the Lake Serene Trail (which retains a past dual designation as a road) to access their property to log portions of their land that may impact the integrity and experience from the trail corridor. Additionally, a request has been made that may close this popular trail for up to 8 months including weekends and holidays.

We are asking the Forest to balance these requests carefully with the ongoing and future recreation value of this trail and the experience it offers to so many to ensure that the impacts of any activity are mitigated appropriately and that such a disturbance does not happen again in the future. We urge the Forest to strongly consider the following specific comments:

- We strongly support and appreciate the proposed maintenance activities for the trailhead outhouses and parking area.
- Make the following adjustments to the proposed length of closure and the impact on trail access to accommodate both the private landowner and forest visitors and recreationists:
 - The closure period should be reduced to Oct. 2, 2017 through Mar. 31, 2018 in order to allow trail access during the prime hiking season.
 - Allow public access on the trail to Lake Serene and Bridal Veil Falls during the weekends (Saturday and Sunday) and holidays throughout the closure period. The fact that the priority work days for the logging operation (weekdays) and the most popular recreation days for visitors (weekends and holidays) are complementary is an opportunity to balance these conflicting interests.
- Include the following modifications in the final Closure Order to ensure that the integrity of the trail including visual impacts are retained:
 - Work with Weyerhaeuser on the project design and implementation to avoid visual and physical impacts to the trail as much as possible. This may include an adequate buffer from the trail to avoid visual impacts from clearcutting or heavily logged viewsapes.
 - Once the project is complete ensure the trail is repaired and converted to a trail—leaving it better than Weyerhaeuser found it.
 - Re-designate the trail as a single designation hiking trail to avoid an additional disturbance in the future
- The above stipulations should be made clear as part of any permit that is issued for this project.

Many of our organizations have supported the acquisition of this private inholding for more than a decade. The adjacent parcel has been part of requests for Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) funding with the intent of avoiding this type of conflict between the public and recreationists and the impacts of adjacent private landowner management. We urge the Forest to re-emphasize support for this LWCF request during the current appropriations cycle to avoid future conflicts of this nature.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed temporary Closure Order for the Lake Serene and Bridal Veil Falls Trailhead and Trail. Please feel free to contact Tom Uniack (206-633-1992) on behalf of the signatories if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,

Tom Uniack
Executive Director
Washington Wild
tom@wawild.org

Yvonne Kraus
Executive Director
Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance
yvonne@evergreenmtb.org

Andrea Imler
Advocacy Director
Washington Trails Association
aimler@wta.org

Kathy Young
President
Back Country Horsemen of Washington
kyoung1735@gmail.com

Maria Povec
Policy and Advocacy Director
American Alpine Club
mpovec@americanalpineclub.org

Matt Perkins
Secretary
Washington Climbers Coalition
matt@mattsea.com

Jen Watkins
Conservation Associate
Conservation Northwest
jwatkins@conservationnw.org

Gus Bekker
President
El Sendero Backcountry Ski & Snowshoe Club
gwbekker@gmail.com

Marlies Wierenga
PNW Conservation Manager
WildEarth Guardians
mwierenga@wildearthguardians.org

Tom Hammond
President
North Cascades Conservation Council
tphammond@gmail.com

Karl Forsgaard
President
Alpine Lakes Protection Society
karlforsgaard@comcast.net

Ben Greuel
Washington State Director
The Wilderness Society
benjamin_greuel@twc.org

Thomas O'Keefe
Pacific Northwest Stewardship Director
American Whitewater
okeefe@americanwhitewater.org

Joe Sambataro
Northwest Regional Director
Access Fund
joe@accessfund.org

Katherine Hollis
Conservation and Advocacy Director
The Mountaineers
katherineh@mountaineers.org

Harry Romberg
Co-Chair National Forest Committee
Washington Chapter, Sierra Club
hbromb@aol.com