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BLM
Spokane District Office

BLM RELEASES IMPROVEMENT PLANS ON WATMOUGH BAY TRAILHEAD

SPOKANE, WA: The BLM is preparing to make improvements to the facilities and parking area at the Watmough Bay Trailhead, and is seeking public comment on the Environmental Assessment, (EA) of the proposed plans. The project area is on the southwest side of Lopez Island, in San Juan County, Washington.

In 1990, BLM designated federal lands in the vicinity of Watmough Bay as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern, (ACEC) to emphasize management of the area for its unique natural values. According to the EA, "Improvements to the site are needed to accommodate the current recreational use and protect the natural values of the ACEC."

Multiple improvement options are being considered for the site including a new vault toilet, an additional bike rack, an enlarged parking area, and the removal of an iron gate with creosote posts that pose a possible contamination risk to the surrounding environment.

The proposed improvements will also increase access for individuals with disabilities. According to the EA, "the gate does not allow barrier-free access to the existing accessible trail. This reduces the possibility of an individual who may be mobility impaired to experience the area."

The assessment further states that "Watmough Bay ACEC is one of a few areas on Lopez Island where visitors can access a public beach and walking trails. As a result, this site receives approximately 15,000 visitors a year, including boaters, seasonal visitors, and permanent residents."

"To avoid conflict with recreational use of the site, all large-scale projects will be scheduled before May 15," Sally Sovey, BLM Wenatchee Field Office Manager said "which is outside the visitor high-use season."

"Watmough Bay is a special place and touches all who visit by land or sea. This area is a true treasure," Nick Teague, BLM Outdoor Recreation Planner, Lopez Island, said.

The full EA is available on the internet at www.blm.gov/or/districts/spokane/plans, or upon request from; the Spokane District Office (509.536.1200), Wenatchee Field Office (509.665.2100), or Lopez Island Office (360.468.3754). BLM is seeking comments on the EA until March 6, 2008. Email comments to gteague@blm.gov or send to BLM, Lopez Island Office, P.O. Box 3, Lopez Island, WA 98261

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