



NEWS RELEASE

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Agencies and Volunteers Collaborate to Protect Resources in the Reiter Foothills Area

Planning committee will present recommendations early next year

OLYMPIA – Reiter Foothills in eastern Snohomish County has long been a popular recreation area. The 10,000-acre area, 30 miles east of Everett, attracts off-road enthusiasts, campers, hikers, mountain bikers, and hunters. The southern portion, in particular, has become increasingly popular over the years for ATV, motorcycle, and 4x4 use.

In 2007, the State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) received funding to conduct a planning process for Reiter Foothills. This year, DNR put together an advisory committee made up of recreation users and local citizens. Using scientific data to guide their work, the committee has been working to design what is right for the land and what is right for users in this area. By March 2009, the advisory committee will make recommendations to DNR, which will acquire the necessary funding to restore the site, build facilities, and work with volunteers to bring Reiter Foothills up to date as a safe, sustainable recreation site in a working forest.

At the same time, the ongoing environmental damage needed immediate attention. Reiter Foothills is so popular that some areas have become overused, and some streams and streambanks have experienced environmental damage from off-trail riding and sheer numbers of users. DNR and the Departments of Ecology and Fish and Wildlife, Snohomish County, and the Tulalip Tribes jointly identified some interim work to protect against further resource damage. These interim measures will help to correct the problems until the advisory group can complete its final recommendations and DNR determines the best course of action for the long term.

With the support of Northwest Quad Association, Pacific Northwest Four Wheel Drive Association, and Reiter Trail Watch, projects have been completed that: protect streams from sediment; protect water quality; protect wetlands and fish habitat, and clean up and prevent litter.

“The active involvement of recreation users across the state and including Reiter Foothills is key to the ongoing success of DNR,” said DNR Assistant Region Manager Candace Johnson.

“We could not accomplish all of the on-site work without their volunteer support, and really appreciate the hard work they do.”

Key work projects completed this fall by volunteers include hardening the Deer Creek crossing, a weekend area cleanup, and the repair of fencing around Reiter Pond. The fencing is in place to protect the pond area by eliminating motorized access.

Arlene Brooks, Washington State Director, Pacific Northwest Four Wheel Drive Association supports the planning and management efforts in the Reiter Foothills area. “The standards and guidelines DNR uses are important to protect resources and allow continuing recreation activity

in areas like this,” Brooks said. “Increased population in our area will result in increased recreation activities. As a result, we all need to continue to work together as we recreate in the forests of Washington. We are willing to help any way we can.”

Illegal garbage dumping is another issue that needed immediate attention, and 40 to 50 ecology blocks will be placed in the Reiter Foothills between now and January, in partnership with the Department of Ecology and Snohomish County. According to Dave Garland, Supervisor for the Department of Ecology’s Northwest Region Water Quality Program, illegal dumping is a prevalent environmental problem in many remote areas. “It’s unfortunate that, in the Reiter Hills area where we are trying to protect sensitive resources like streams while allowing for recreational use, repeated incidences of illegal dumping near water make blocking some areas necessary. Recreational users play an important role in protecting resources by keeping watch and reporting dumping when they see it happening.”

The ecology blocks will prevent illegal garbage dumping by preventing heavy vehicle use, which is also adversely affecting water quality. Primary off-road vehicle routes that are currently being used will not be blocked.

These are interim measures taken to prevent further resource damage. Decisions regarding permanent use of routes are pending completion of the Reiter Foothills Recreation Planning Process spring 2009.

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DNR manages more than 5.6 million acres of state-owned forest, range, commercial, agricultural, conservation, and aquatic lands. More than half of these lands are held in trust and produce income to support public schools, universities, prisons, and other state institutions. Lands managed by DNR provide other public benefits as well, including outdoor recreation, fish and wildlife habitat, and clean and abundant water.

Along with these other roles, the department regulates surface mining reclamation and forest debris burning, administers the state Forest Practices rules on private and state-owned forest lands, and provides wildfire protection for 12.7 million acres of tribal, private, and state-owned forests. DNR offers technical assistance and education on a range of subjects, including forest stewardship, mining, geologic hazards, and rare plant species and ecosystems.

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