Environmental Assessment

Three Pools Day Use Site Rehabilitation Project

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Detroit Ranger District
Marion and Linn County, Oregon

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Chapter 1. Introduction

Document Structure

The Forest Service has prepared this Environmental Assessment in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other relevant Federal and State laws and regulations. This Environmental Assessment discloses the direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental impacts that would result from the proposed action and alternatives. The document is organized into four parts:

- **Introduction**: The section includes information on the history of the project proposal, the purpose of and need for the project, and the agency’s proposal for achieving that purpose and need. This section also details how the Forest Service informed the public of the proposal and how the public responded.

- **Comparison of Alternatives**: This section provides a more detailed description of the agency’s proposed action. This discussion also includes possible mitigation measures. Finally, this section provides a summary table of the environmental consequences associated with each alternative.

- **Environmental Consequences**: This section describes the environmental effects of implementing the proposed action and other alternatives. This analysis is organized by resource area. Within each section, the current condition of the affected environment is described first, followed by the effects of the No Action Alternative that provides a baseline for evaluation and comparison of the other alternatives that follow.

- **Agencies and Persons Consulted**: This section provides a list of preparers and agencies consulted during the development of the environmental assessment.

- **Appendices**: The appendices provide more detailed information to support the analyses presented in the environmental assessment.

Additional documentation, including more detailed analyses of project-area resources, may be found in the project planning record located at the Detroit Ranger District Office in Detroit, Oregon located at 44125 North.Santiam Highway SE.
Area Description and Background

Three Pools Day Use Area is situated within the Opal Creek Scenic Recreation Area (SRA) on the western slopes of the Cascade Mountains, about 35 miles east of the City of Salem. This 15 acre area is nestled along the picturesque Little North Santiam River, a State Scenic Waterway, and Forest Road 2207 in Township 8.S., Range 4.E., Section 34, within the Detroit Ranger District, Willamette National Forest, Marion County. The site is within the eastern portion of the Little North Santiam watershed which is almost entirely National Forest.

Three Pools is the only day use site in the SRA. It is a popular summer destination and touted as “the grandest swimming hole complex in the Little North Santiam River.” These clear emerald pools attract well over 15,000 visitors each year. About 68% of visitors are from the Willamette Valley including local residents of the North Santiam Canyon, and 25% are from the Portland metropolitan area (Pavoni, 2000). The site has about a 71% repeat visitation rate with half of these visitors returning more than 4 times a year. Common recreational activities at the site include swimming, fishing, picnicking, sightseeing, gold panning and kayaking. The site is mostly known by word of mouth through family and friends but is also publicized in a book titled Oregon’s Swimming Holes and featured in various websites.

The amount of visitor use at Three Pools is directly dependent on weather. Three Pools receives its heaviest use in July and August on hot days when it’s most conducive to swimming - the most popular activity at this site. A few peak weekend days, between 1-6 days, will yield about 160-180 vehicles or about 500-600 people at one time. On one hot day in July of 2006, nearly double this use was observed. Normal summer weekend use varies from 35-100 vehicles at one time or up to about 300 people at one time. Generally, use begins in the late-morning and picks up during the heat of the day, around 3:00-6:00 pm, and gradually decreases until dusk. After hours or overnight use occurs occasionally and is difficult to deter without active law enforcement.

Parking within the site is along an 1100-foot, single-lane primitive road with turnouts or parking “bubbles” and no formally designated parking spaces. The parking area usually fills on hot weekend days and vehicles sometimes overflow onto the 2207 Road. About 60-80 vehicles can be found parked in the site with over 100 vehicles observed parked along Road 2207 within ½ a mile of the site.

Three Pools was established as a day use area in 1993 by a Code of Federal Regulations special order to help deal with law enforcement’s concerns about illegal and inappropriate behaviors. These problems often turned visitors’ away especially families that felt threatened or
didn’t want to be exposed to offensive behaviors. While the overall situation has improved by the evidence of more families returning, unlawful and unruly activities continue to be documented at the site such as under-aged drinking, drug use and possession, fighting and boisterous behavior (exacerbated with alcohol use), littering & deliberate breaking of glass bottles, illegal campfires and camping, vandalism, vehicle break-ins, target shooting, nudity, sex offenses, and domestic disputes. There have been several injuries and deaths at this popular swimming hole as a result of jumping from rocks or drowning sometimes attributed to intoxication.

The intensity of use and inappropriate behaviors caused concerns about public health and safety, and impacts to resources and visitor experiences. Modest facility improvements were made in 1992-93 to resolve some of these issues. An increase in Forest Service and law enforcement presence has also helped. To deal with sanitation problems, vault toilets were installed and garbage cans were placed at the site. A 50-foot stairway was constructed to provide safe designated access to the popular lower pool area. Facilities such as picnic tables and informational & regulatory signing have minimally been provided because of recurring vandalism. Signs are placed high on trees to avoid being removed or damaged. In 2003, the vault toilet was burned down by vandals and was replaced in 2005. Currently, no recreation fees are charged at this site.
Purpose and Need for Action

This section describes the existing condition and desired condition at Three Pools, and explains the need for the project proposal. A need for action is usually triggered when the existing conditions do not meet the desired conditions. Implementing the proposed action would resolve the discrepancies between the existing and desired condition.

Statement of Need for Action

The District Ranger of the Detroit Ranger District of the Willamette National Forest has determined there is a need to take management actions that help promote a safer, family-friendly, healthful and aesthetic environment at Three Pools by providing basic physical infrastructure that will:

- Accommodate existing recreational use and provide for some increased demand on most non-peak days,
- Provide formal organized parking and set a vehicle capacity to reduce road and parking congestion,
- Provide safe road access into the site and trail access along the river,
- Provide modest day use facilities at Three Pools to help meet minimum public safety and sanitation standards and visitor needs, and provide some barrier-free opportunities to persons with disabilities,
- Restore resource conditions combined with new facilities to provide for sustainable protection of the resources, and
- Improve and support onsite visitor management strategies.

Purpose for Action

The underlying purpose for this project is to implement direction in the Opal Creek Scenic Recreation Area Management Plan to help improve safety, social and resource conditions within the Three Pools day use area to align with the desired condition. Current management and facilities at Three Pools do not meet Management Plan objectives for providing a quality recreation setting.
Assessment of Need for Action

Existing Condition

Public Health and Safety:

- Traffic safety problems stem from insufficient and unorganized parking, road congestion, and poor ingress/egress into the site from Forest Road 2207. Some of the overflow and congestion occurs when other recreation sites in the Little North Santiam recreation corridor are busy.

  The existing parking area cannot accommodate the number of vehicles the site receives during the summer, resulting in overflow parking along Forest Road 2207 causing further congestion. Parking within the site is along an 1100-foot, single-lane road with wide spots and no designated parking spaces, which causes uncontrolled and indiscriminate parking. Often vehicles are haphazardly parked in a manner that blocks other vehicles and inconveniences visitors. At this point, the site becomes inaccessible for emergency vehicles and hinders law enforcement, ambulance and fire engine personnel’s ability to respond to situations. It also compromises officer safety by either not having vehicle access into the site or ability to readily leave the site.

  The site entrance is unsafe for two-way traffic. It is a single lane approach on a steep pitch with limited visibility. Exiting passenger vehicles have difficulty negotiating a right-turn onto Road 2207 because of the acute angle of the intersection.

- Many user-created trails that access popular swimming holes and large “jump-off rocks” into the river are located on very steep and exposed slopes causing potential safety concerns. Injuries have been reported as a result of jumping from rocks.

- A recently installed double vault toilet is not sufficient for the volume of use at the site. The toilet is located in a forested canopy and does not get adequate radiant heating from sun exposure to dissipate odors. Many visitors are not satisfied with the facilities because the toilet smells bad and some avoid using it. Others elect not to walk the distance to use the toilet. This results in human waste being disposed in an unsanitary and exposed manner around the site, and is unsightly.
Littering and intentional breaking of bottles on the site has become a health and safety concern, and is unsightly. Each year numerous injuries from stepping on broken glass are reported.

Resources:

- Years of intensive use at Three Pools and unconfined foot and vehicle travel on the site has resulted in damage and some loss of vegetation. When the parking area is full, other vehicles park on vegetation in places where no natural barriers are present. This causes soil compaction and negatively affects tree health and denudes the area of vegetation. A network of user-created trails along the river located on steep slopes causes some displacement of soil. The current condition of the riparian area does not meet the intent of the Northwest Forest Plan Aquatic Conservation Strategy objectives.

Facilities:

- Limited investment has been made to the existing facilities. Facilities are provided primarily for site protection and sanitation purposes including regulatory signing, toilet, garbage receptacles and stair access to the main swimming hole. Vandalism has been a problem particularly during times of limited administrative or law enforcement presence.
- There is an unmet public need for facilities and improvements such as more and improved parking, toilet facilities, and trails, more picnic sites and interpretation, improved litter and sanitation management, and improved road conditions. Local communities desire adequate facilities to improve the attractiveness of the area as a safe place to visit and to enhance quality of life and economic benefits in the area.

Desired Condition

The Omnibus Parks and Public Lands Management Act of 1996 (Public Law 104-333, referred to as the “Opal Creek Act”) designated the Opal Creek Scenic Recreation Area to: 1) protect and provide for the enhancement of the natural, scenic, recreational, historic and cultural resources of Opal Creek, 2) protect and support the economy of North Santiam Canyon communities and 3) provide increased protection for an important drinking water source for communities served by the North Santiam River. The Opal Creek Scenic Recreation Area (SRA) Management Plan was developed to comply with the act and amends the 1990 Willamette National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan). The SRA Management Plan guides all management activities within the SRA. The plan defines the desired condition that is sought within all or portions of the SRA, and identified applicable standards to achieve these management goals.

The SRA is divided into four management zones based on recreation use intensity that determine: types of experiences and relative amount of use recreationists can expect; types and level of developments and where facilities are appropriate; and degrees to which visitors are
regulated or managed by onsite controls as well as the types of information and interpretive services provided. Specific desired conditions are identified within the Opal Creek SRA Management Plan (USDA FS 2002) for each management zone. Three Pools day use area falls within the High Intensity Management Zone and the Desired Condition for this area is as follows:

- **Recreation Opportunity Spectrum:** The high intensity zone is managed to provide visitors opportunity to recreate in a roaded natural environment of high scenic integrity with moderately but rustically developed facilities. Frequently there are numerous people present particularly during summer weekends, when contacts among recreationists are very high and may last for a moderate-to-long period of time.

- **Use and occupancy** are managed to protect natural resources, minimize depreciative behavior, prevent conflicting uses, and to ensure healthy, safe and enjoyable recreational experiences. Resource destruction, vandalism and disturbances to visitors are minimal. A higher degree of regulation and management presence occurs in management zones of intensive use. Recreation activities are permitted at a level not less than those that existed on the date of enactment of the Opal Creek legislation. The SRA accommodates increasing numbers of visitors while ensuring that ecosystem values are protected, and quality of recreational experiences and objectives for which the SRA was established are maintained.

- **Management and law enforcement** presence, and on site visitor management controls such as informational and regulatory signs, established parking areas, and barriers, are obvious. An information and education program to enhance visitors’ knowledge, understanding and enjoyment of the SRA is very apparent, and encourages appropriate and safe use.

- **Information and education** enhance visitors’ knowledge, understanding and enjoyment of the SRA, and encourage appropriate and safe use.

- **Roads:** Access to recreation sites and facilities in existence on the date of enactment of the Opal Creek legislation is maintained. The roads provide safe access to recreation sites with minimal dust and noise around major use areas. Road congestion around recreation sites is minimal with adequate parking to protect resources and aesthetics, and ensure safety. Roads are maintained to a standard appropriate for the setting they traverse, the volume of traffic and the types of vehicles commensurate with recreation and resource management objectives.

- **Facilities:** Day use developed facilities such as parking areas, picnic sites, sanitation facilities, vehicle control barriers, kiosks, river access, viewing platforms, boardwalks, and hiking trails are provided. Developed recreation sites are located close to the road and provide the necessary infrastructure to accommodate concentrated recreation use and protect resource values. Facilities accommodate high concentrations of users, protect
fragile natural resources and meet sanitary and safety needs. Facility development is initiated in selected areas to accommodate increasing use, minimize user conflicts, and for the enjoyment, understanding and protection of natural aspects of the area. Development planning considers such factors as user needs and demand patterns, specific site suitability, resource objectives and cost efficiency of installation, operation and maintenance. Facilities are designed for the enjoyment of the SRA’s natural resources while preserving the focal points of interest, rather than serving as attractions in themselves. Facilities are subordinate to the focal attraction, are simple and durable in design, and harmonize with the surrounding natural environment. Facilities are kept in good condition and appear well maintained to desired standards and service levels. New and upgraded facilities comply with accessibility standards.

- **Trails** are primarily used by hikers and provide some challenge and require a low to moderate level of physical ability and skill to travel. Some trail segments may provide access for people with disabilities.

- **Local Communities and Economies**: The economies of local communities benefit from safe, reasonable access to and use of the SRA. In addition to adequate facilities, the quality and variety of the recreational opportunities create a positive visitor experience, and encourage new and return visitation. Recreational and educational opportunities offered within the SRA, as well as the attractiveness of the area as a safe place to visit, benefit the local economy by drawing visitors many of whom will patronize local businesses. People are attracted to the natural and scenic amenities of the SRA and move to nearby communities, bringing income and new businesses.

- **Vegetation**: Cutting of trees is allowed for public safety and activities related to administration of the SRA consistent with the Opal Creek SRA Management Plan.

The Forest Plan as amended by the 1994 Northwest Forest Plan describes other desired conditions relevant to this project area:

- **Riparian Reserves**: Recreation facilities and roads within Riparian Reserves meet, and to the extent practical, contribute to the attainment of Aquatic Conservation Strategy objectives. Recreation practices that are preventing the attainment of ACS objectives are adjusted through measures such as education, use limitations, traffic control devices, relocation of facilities, and/or specific site closures.
Proposed Action

This section describes the proposed action developed by the USDA Forest Service to meet the purpose and need for action. A proposed action is not a decision. Upon completion of initial public scoping, alternatives to the proposed action are developed and analyzed; however, no new alternatives were generated since no significant issues were raised (see Issues section below). Alternatives, the no action and the proposed action, are described in Chapter 2 of the Environmental Assessment, and will be considered in the final decision after the 30-day public comment period. A decision is expected on the proposal in April 2007.

Proposed Action

The Forest Service proposes to reconstruct the road and parking areas within the Three Pools Day Use Area to accommodate public access and use. It would set a vehicle capacity and confine vehicles to designated locations. Other improvements would include: delineating and improving trails and obliterating undesirable or unsafe routes; installing features to protect resources and rehabilitate damage caused by unconfined travel and parking; and installing minor recreation facilities and sanitation facilities.

The proposed improvements would generally accommodate existing use and demands but would not support the maximum number of vehicles that have been observed on a few peak days. These physical improvements would help regulate use more effectively and improve the area’s character to a more positive image that is "family-friendly."

Some minor construction could begin as early as June of 2007 and the site would continue to be open to public use. Major construction activities would begin as soon as September of 2007, however, the site would be closed to public use until the project is completed. Elements of the proposal include:

Road and Parking Improvements

- Within a 2.7 acre area, provide a one-way graveled loop road with clusters of delineated parking spaces for about 100 passenger vehicles. It would involve approximately 900 feet of road construction and 1100 feet of reconstruction. The design and reconstruction shall consider future paving which will be analyzed in this environmental assessment.

- Clear approximately 0.43 acres of trees or vegetation to allow for construction of new portions of road and parking areas. The design would integrate and retain existing trees where possible to minimize the amount of vegetation removed and to maintain the desired scenic forested setting. Removed trees would not be sold and would be used for barriers, habitat improvements or for other purposes consistent with the Opal Creek SRA Management Plan. Remaining slash would be treated either mechanically by chipping or by piling and burning to comply with the State of Oregon's Smoke Management Plan.
Reconstruction would utilize existing access roads, parking areas and other disturbed areas to the greatest extent possible to keep the footprint of the project as small as possible.

Delineate parking spaces with curb stops and other methods of designation to confine vehicles. Install traffic control devices such as boulders, wooden or log traffic barriers, and traffic directional and regulatory signing along road shoulders and no-parking areas.

Provide emergency vehicle parking and short-term loading/unloading areas closest to the lower pool access point. Some wheel chair accessible parking spaces would be designated to access the scenic overlook, picnic tables and toilet.

Reconstruct the site entrance perpendicular to Road 2207 to improve ingress/egress and allow for two-way traffic. The two-way section of the road would be delineated by a centerline curb to prevent vehicles from being parking on road shoulders and narrowing it down to one-lane.

Designate and post a “No Parking” zone along Road 2207 within ½ mile of either direction from Three Pools.

Access Trails

Reconstruct about ¼ mile of trail from the eastern parking area to the east end of the site to allow safe access to the upper pools. The existing 150 foot stairway to the lower pool would be reconstructed. Two overlooks would be created along the trail with wooden rails for safety. A 117-foot stairway would be constructed to the lower overlook.

Reconstruct a portion of the east trail to create a wheel-chair accessible route to the upper scenic overlook of the pools.

Obliterate and rehab about 0.3 miles of user-created trails and unsafe river access points. Install wooden post fences to discourage use of unsafe routes and discourage new routes from being created.

Recreation Facilities

Provide information and interpretive kiosks to orient and educate visitors. Signs would inform visitors of regulations and instill safety awareness such as the inherent dangers of the river environment and other pertinent safety messages.

Install picnic tables and benches at the site, including some that are barrier-free.

Install one additional barrier-free double vault concrete toilet that would include a men’s and women’s family unit. The toilet would be located closer to the lower pool but serviceable from the parking lot.

Install additional garbage receptacles at key locations and increase education to help reduce litter.
Design Criteria to Protect Resources

- Design and reconstruct roads and trails to meet Federal General Water Quality Best Management Practices to ensure water quality is protected (see Design Measures for Hydrology and Fisheries in Chapter 2).

- Drainage of the site will be designed to spread run-off over the landscape and allow water to infiltrate through the soil. No point source discharge or runoff is allowed under the Three Basin Rule for the North Santiam; therefore, water runoff cannot be collected from road and parking surfaces and discharged directly into a stream channel.

- Install approximately 3500 linear feet of wooden post fence between river and trails or parking areas for resource protection and improve visitor safety. This will effectively direct traffic to stay on trails and access the river at safe locations and prevent user created trails.

- Prepare soil and re-vegetate shoulders of reconstructed road and abandoned old roadbed and user created trails with competitive seeding and native plantings.

Decision Framework

The Responsible Official for this proposal District Ranger of the Detroit Ranger District on the Willamette National Forest. The Responsible Official shall review the proposed action and consider whether or not they meet the purpose and need to implement direction in the Opal Creek SRA Management Plan (USDA FS 2002) to help improve safety, social and resource conditions within the Three Pools Day Use Area to align with the desired condition. After completion of the Environmental Assessment (EA), there will be a 30-day public comment period. Based on the response to this EA and the analysis disclosed in the EA, the Responsible Official will make a decision and document it in a Decision Notice. The Responsible Official may decide to either:

- Select the proposed action,
- Modify the proposed action, or
- Select the no-action alternative

The Responsible Official would also determine if all actions within the selected alternative are consistent with the Willamette Forest Plan as amended by the Opal Creek SRA Management Plan.
Management Direction and Tiered Documents

Relationship to the Forest Plan and the Northwest Forest Plan

This environmental assessment is tiered to and relies upon the analysis in the 1990 Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Record of Decision (ROD) for the Willamette National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (hereafter referred to as the Forest Plan) (USDA, 1990) and all subsequent NEPA analyses for plan amendments including the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement on the Management of Habitat for Late-Successional and Old-Growth Forest Related Species Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl (USDA, USDI, 1994). The Willamette Forest Plan, as amended, provides a Forest-level strategy for managing land and resources, and the Northwest Forest Plan provides a regional strategy for management of old-growth and late-successional forest ecosystems on federal lands. The plans provide direction, land allocations (management areas) and standards and guidelines for the management of National Forest lands within the project area. The project falls within two management areas: MA-2c Opal Scenic Recreation Area and MA-15 Riparian Reserves.

MA-2c Opal Creek Scenic Recreation Area

The goals are described in the Desired Condition Section above for this management area. The SRA Management Plan guides all management activities within the SRA. The underlying purpose for this project is to implement direction in the Opal Creek Scenic Recreation Area Management Plan to help improve safety, social and resource conditions within the Three Pools day use area to align with the desired condition.

MA-15 Riparian Reserves

Riparian Reserves are one of the six designated management areas identified in the Northwest Forest Plan. The primary goal for lands located in this management area is to maintain the ecological function of rivers, streams, wetlands, and lakes within the landscape. Riparian Reserves usually include at least the water body, inner gorges, all riparian vegetation, 100-year floodplain, landslides, and landslide-prone areas. Recreation facilities and roads within Riparian Reserves should meet, and to the extent practical, contribute to the attainment of Aquatic Conservation Strategy objectives.

Relationship to the Watershed Analysis

The Aquatic Conservation Strategy in the Northwest Forest Plan included a requirement to prepare comprehensive watershed analyses for all fifth field watersheds. The Little North Santiam (LNS) Watershed Analysis was completed in December 1997 and is incorporated by reference. The 72,460 acre LNS watershed is comprised of eleven subwatersheds (sixth field), 7 of which are on the National Forest. This document provides the Responsible Official with comprehensive information upon which to base land management decisions and establishes a consistent, watershed level context to project level analysis. The watershed analysis provides descriptions of the reference and existing conditions of the important physical, biological, and
social components of the fifth field watersheds. The study analyzed activities and processes that cumulatively altered the LNS landscapes over time and recommends watershed management activities based upon landscape and ecological objectives. The watershed analysis is used to characterize elements of the watersheds, provided background information for the direct, indirect and cumulative effects analyses, and provided recommendations for management activities.

**Public Involvement**

**Opal Creek Scenic Recreation Area Advisory Council**

As directed by the Opal Creek Act, the Forest Service consults with a federally appointed advisory council on matters relating to the management of the SRA. The advisory council consists of 13 members, each of whom represents a particular interest including recreation, education and research, environmental organizations, economic development, mining, Marion County (law enforcement), City of Salem, State of Oregon, Indian tribes, inholders, and adjacent communities and landowners.

The Advisory Council identified Three Pools as a high priority area within the SRA needing improvement to meet the Desired Condition. The Opal Creek Advisory Council originally submitted a letter of support in May 2006 to the Hood-Willamette Resource Advisory Committee to fund improvements at Three Pools through the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000 (Public Law 106-393) otherwise known as “Payments to Counties.” The project was supported by the Hood-Willamette Resource Advisory Committee who approved $124,875 of funding on September 29, 2006 for site improvements upon completion of the environmental analysis.

The proposed action was developed based on previous discussions and site visits with the advisory council. A presentation about the project was made by the Forest Service to the Opal Creek Advisory Council on October 25, 2006 to assist with the development of the proposed action. Since there was no quorum, a subcommittee was formed and provided input to be presented at a subsequent meeting. At the December 6, 2006 meeting, the Opal Creek Advisory Council held discussion and made a recommendation to unanimously support the proposed action as presented and no issues were raised.

**Public Scoping**

Scoping is an ongoing process used to determine the scope and significance of a proposed set of actions, to determine the issues that should be addressed in analyzing proposed actions, and to determine the alternatives that need to be addressed when accomplishing the analysis. The first announcement of this proposal was made in the Willamette National Forest Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA) - Fall Quarter, October 1, 2006.

The scoping document for this project, a more comprehensive and focused solicitation of public comment, was mailed on November 9, 2006 to a list of 54 individuals, Indian Tribes, organizations, elected officials and other agencies which have expressed or may have interest in
this project. A news release about the proposed project resulted in articles published in the Salem Statesman-Journal on November 20 & 23, 2006, and in the Mill City Independent Press on November 22, 2006. A copy of the scoping notice cover letter, project proposal, and a comment form was also available on the Willamette National Forest web page. Seven written comments were received and are summarized in the Issues section below. In addition, two verbal comments were also received

Issues

Issues are points of concern about environmental effects that may occur as a result of implementing the proposed action. They are generated by the public, other agencies, organizations, and Forest Service resource specialists and are in response to the proposed action.

The Forest Service separates the issues into two groups: significant and non-significant issues. Significant issues describe a dispute or present an unresolved conflict associated with potential environmental effects of the proposed action. Non-significant issues are identified as those: 1) outside the scope of the proposed action; 2) already decided by law, regulation, Forest Plan, or other higher level decision; 3) irrelevant to the decision to be made; or 4) conjectural and not supported by scientific or factual evidence. The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) NEPA regulations require this delineation in Sec. 1501.7, “…identify and eliminate from detailed study the issues which are not significant or which have been covered by prior environmental review (Sec. 1506.3)…” A list of non-significant issues and reasons regarding their categorization as non-significant can be found in the project planning record and is summarized below. No significant issues were identified for the proposed action.

In summary, eight of nine public comments received were in support of the proposal. One comment was made to minimize site capacity to reduce visitor use levels, which does not meet the Opal Creek SRA Management Plan (USDA FS 2002). Minimizing and maximizing site capacity were both considered but eliminated from detailed study and are discussed in Chapter 2.

Other public comments suggested options for managing recreation use or design criteria. Several comments reflected design considerations such as picnic table, toilet and fence placement, which are consistent with the proposed action and will be incorporated into the final design, where feasible. While important considerations to the management of the area, comments suggesting a bottle ban or to increase law enforcement presence are being addressed administratively throughout the Little North Santiam Recreation Corridor; but is outside the scope of this particular project analysis. Road improvements, traffic controls and designating parking spaces creates orderliness within the site which improves law enforcements ability to safely access the site and their responsiveness to deal with situations more effectively.

A comment regarding concern for safety on county and forest roads due to road condition, high traffic and driver behavior is partly being addressed through annual road maintenance and improvement projects but outside the scope of this project analysis. The Forest Service implemented a 25 mph speed limit on Forest Roads 2209 and 2207 is being strictly enforced.
Improvements to the County road are outside the scope of this analysis. The commenter further suggested limiting the volume of traffic “to weed out folks with less than desirable intentions” by implementing a permit system and requiring identification such as a driver’s license to enter the area. The project does limit the number of people by virtue of establishing vehicle parking capacity at the site. However, screening people that enter the area would not be legal; therefore, was outside the scope of the analysis.

The Forest Service identified visitor displacement as a non-significant issue since it is speculative and did not generate the formulation of an alternative. The effects of visitor displacement, however, are discussed in the pertinent sections of the effects analysis in Chapter 3 for Recreation, Heritage Resources, Hydrology, Fisheries, Botanical Species and Wildlife Habitat.

- **Visitor Displacement:** The capacity of the site would not accommodate the maximum number of vehicles that have been observed within and adjacent the site on a few peak weekend days when the weather is exceptionally hot (>90°F) in July and August. This may potentially result in visitor displacement to adjacent undeveloped areas or other popular swimming sites along the North Fork Road throughout the Little North Santiam River corridor or even outside of the watershed. Displacement is very difficult to predict as to how much there will be, where it will take place and what factors are attributing to it. Visitor demand for areas like Three Pools will continue to rise with population growth and may attribute to displacement.