



WASHINGTON STATE
Recreation and
Conservation Office

RECREATIONAL TRAILS PROGRAM

**Sample Materials
Submitted by Applicant**

NACHES RANGER DISTRICT (OKANOGAN-WENATCHEE NATIONAL FOREST)
NACHES MOTORIZED TRAILS M & O 2011-2012
July 14, 2010

1) **NEED.** The need for a high quality motorized trail maintenance and operations program on the Naches District is driven by several factors:

- **High Public Use and Demand:** The Naches District of the Okanogan & Wenatchee National Forest manages over 250 miles of system motorized trails on 61 trails over 295,000 acres of national forest. This includes 140 miles of motorcycle trails and 110 miles of four wheel drive routes. The Little Naches drainage is regionally known for its 102 miles of motorcycle trails, and Divide Ridge for its challenging four wheel drive routes. Our centrally located trail system connects to other heavily used motorized systems on the Cle Elum and White River Districts, and the Ahtanum State Forest.

We estimate over 100,000 visitors used the Naches motorized trail system in 2009; 70% rode motorized vehicles. The Naches District is one of the most heavily used motorized areas in the state (about 10% of all the motorized trail opportunities in Washington). It's well known for its variety of trail settings and difficulty levels, and sunny climate. Sixty to seventy five percent of users come from outside the local area (I-5 corridor, the Tri-Cities and Ellensburg). The District trail maintenance crew, OHV Rangers, and long-time volunteers are convinced that both use and resource damage has increased **dramatically** in 2010 with a noticeable increase in new users and from modified OHV's with oversized tires. Discussion with users confirms that other recent closures (including Reiter Pit) has prompted them to try out the Naches District - this has increased the need for trail maintenance.

- **Resource Protection:** Wind, heavy snows, and rainy weather patterns are uncontrollable and affect our trail system's condition. Soils, water quality, fisheries habitat and vegetation resources adjacent to the trails are continuously threatened through blow down and inadequate drainage. *Routine trail clearing and drainage work is crucial* to preventing resource damage from user created detours. *Consistent attention to drainage is also imperative*, because water on the trail quickly degrades the tread and users either create mud holes in the tread through soil displacement; or they create detours to avoid the wet areas, causing vegetation loss. Water and sediment to flow into streams, impacting water quality and habitat for threatened species such as bull trout and steelhead. Trail conditions can deteriorate rapidly – one holiday weekend of extremely wet weather (for example, Memorial Day 2010) can severely damage the system.
- **Providing a Safe, High Quality Trail Experience:** Wenatchee Forest Plan trails direction is to *“Provide a diverse system of safe, well maintained trails for the enjoyment of all users”*. Lack of routine maintenance subjects trail users to unsafe and unpleasant experiences. Regular trail clearing is vital for safe passage. Drainage structure failures can cause safety threats and severely damage trail tread. Quick response to unplanned situations with experienced personnel is essential to keeping the public safe and avoiding emergency closures. We respond numerous times each year to unplanned situations requiring immediate attention.

- **Prolonging the Life of Existing Investments To Minimize Reconstruction:** Our motorized trail system currently includes over 400 boardwalks and bridges, 10 miles of trail hardened with grass grid blocks and rocks, and thousands of water bars. Our trail crew and volunteers have logged thousands of hours in preventative maintenance. Regular maintenance keeps structures functioning so water stays off the tread and passage over them remains safe. The trail system was not designed to handle the type or amount of use it currently receives (many trails originated before motorized riding did) and our trails are wearing out from decades of high use. Regular maintenance to at least a minimum level is essential to keep the system from deteriorating to the point costly reconstruction is required.
- **Maintaining the Existing Motorized Recreation Opportunities:** The Forest Service mission is to manage for multiple use – and that includes maintaining motorized trail opportunities on the Naches District. Trail use will not stop if trails are not maintained, but the system will rapidly deteriorate if regular maintenance is curtailed.
- **Addressing the Maintenance Backlog:** Regular trail maintenance is necessary to minimize the existing maintenance backlog and prevent further backlog. Our goal is to maintain the entire system on a 5 year cycle, with maintenance frequency prioritized by trail. Appropriated dollars do not come close to providing adequate funds to maintain this expansive system. Our current maintenance backlog includes segments of several four wheel drive trails in the Divide Ridge and Tieton Basin areas, substantiated by recent complaints of short wheel-based jeeps and quads users displaced from the deep ruts. RCO funding is *absolutely critical* to be able to keep up with annual maintenance needs and gain ground on backlog issues.

2) **NEED SATISFACTION.** This grant will accomplish the following:

- Clear (log out) 100% of the trail system (250 miles) of seasonal windfall each year (500 miles total) to keep users on the trail. Block braided trails and redirect traffic to designated routes. Clean and inspect 100% of water bars, culverts, and structures; and perform basic repairs.
- Accomplish complete maintenance on 50 percent (125 miles) of the system each year (250 miles total). Install additional water bars, harden wet areas with grass grid blocks, and fill holes with rock to prevent soil displacement and improve safety and the recreation experience.
- Provide rapid, experienced response to safety and resource maintenance emergencies before small problems become large and costly.
- Decrease the maintenance backlog on 30+ trail miles in the Divide Ridge/Tieton Basin areas.

This grant will allow maintenance of the motorized trail system to standard, protect the resources, minimize reconstruction needs, and address the maintenance backlog. We will meet the Forest's goal of providing a diverse trail system for the enjoyment of all legal users, with the primary management objective of maintaining the trails for motorcyclists & four wheel drivers.

4) **MAINTENANCE.** The need for motorized trail maintenance is constant. Addressing maintenance emergencies, annual clearing, and drainage structure maintenance will be the first priorities as public safety and resource protection are our top concerns. 100 percent of the trail

system (250 miles) will be cleared and brushed each year (500 miles total). 50% (125 miles) of the trail system will be maintained to Forest Service standards each year (250 miles total).

Our goal is to keep up with annual maintenance needs while gaining ground on the maintenance backlog. We are committed to extending the service life of the existing system to reduce future reconstruction needs. The trail crew leader and assistant each have several years of experience in all types of maintenance projects and crew supervision. Crew members all have 3+ years of experience and can work independently as well as supervise volunteers and youth crews. Our energetic, experienced volunteers are an integral part of our annual program.

5) READINESS TO PROCEED.

- Our experienced crew will begin work on in May 2011 (upon snowmelt) and work through October, returning for a similar season in 2012. Because our crew is experienced, they can split as needed to work more effectively, and/or supervise volunteers. We have the equipment to do the job. Trails will remain open during maintenance work. No additional environmental clearance or permits are needed.
- Volunteers, including the Pacific Northwest Four Wheel Drive Association, Dust Dodgers, and several other motorcycle and 4X4 clubs have signed Challenge Cost Share Agreements and have worked with the District for years. They are familiar with our trail maintenance needs and safety practices; and are very helpful with clearing and reducing the backlog.

6) COST BENEFIT.

- This grant request is for \$475 mile/year to complete the stated maintenance tasks. This is substantially lower than reconstruction - costs for environmental analysis and subsequent reconstruction start at \$5,000/mile for simple projects.
- This grant provides for continued structural maintenance on water bars, check dams and culverts. Maintaining trails now will extend their service life. If routine maintenance slows, our experience shows the maintenance backlog increases quickly – then chances of needing reconstruction increases. It also helps us avoid closures due to safety and resource concerns.
- Trail erosion from lack of maintenance results in increased resource impacts, especially in our wet areas and on steeper trails that access the ridge tops. Braided trails from user created detours around wet areas causes vegetation loss, and sediment from eroding trails can affect water quality and fisheries habitat.
- Contracting out drainage and tread work costs substantially more than our experienced trails crew due to contract preparation, administration, and overhead. In addition, contracting is not very responsive to unplanned emergency situations.
- Our 69 percent match includes a grant to address the maintenance backlog on Divide Ridge.

7) NON-GOVERNMENT CONTRIBUTIONS. Signed volunteer agreements totaling over 2,000 hours/year are currently on file. We can count on our volunteers – over 2,100 documented hours on motorized trail maintenance in 2009! Fourteen percent of the total project is a non-government contribution (2,400 hours/year).

8) PROJECT SUPPORT. The Naches District Trails & Wilderness Interest Group (TWIG) has met regularly for 14 years, in large part to promote stewardship of the District trail system - they support this project. Our volunteers are enthusiastic and dependable and have signed volunteer agreements. Support letters for this project are on file with RCO.

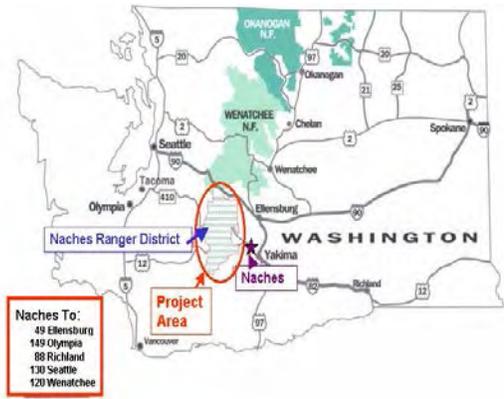
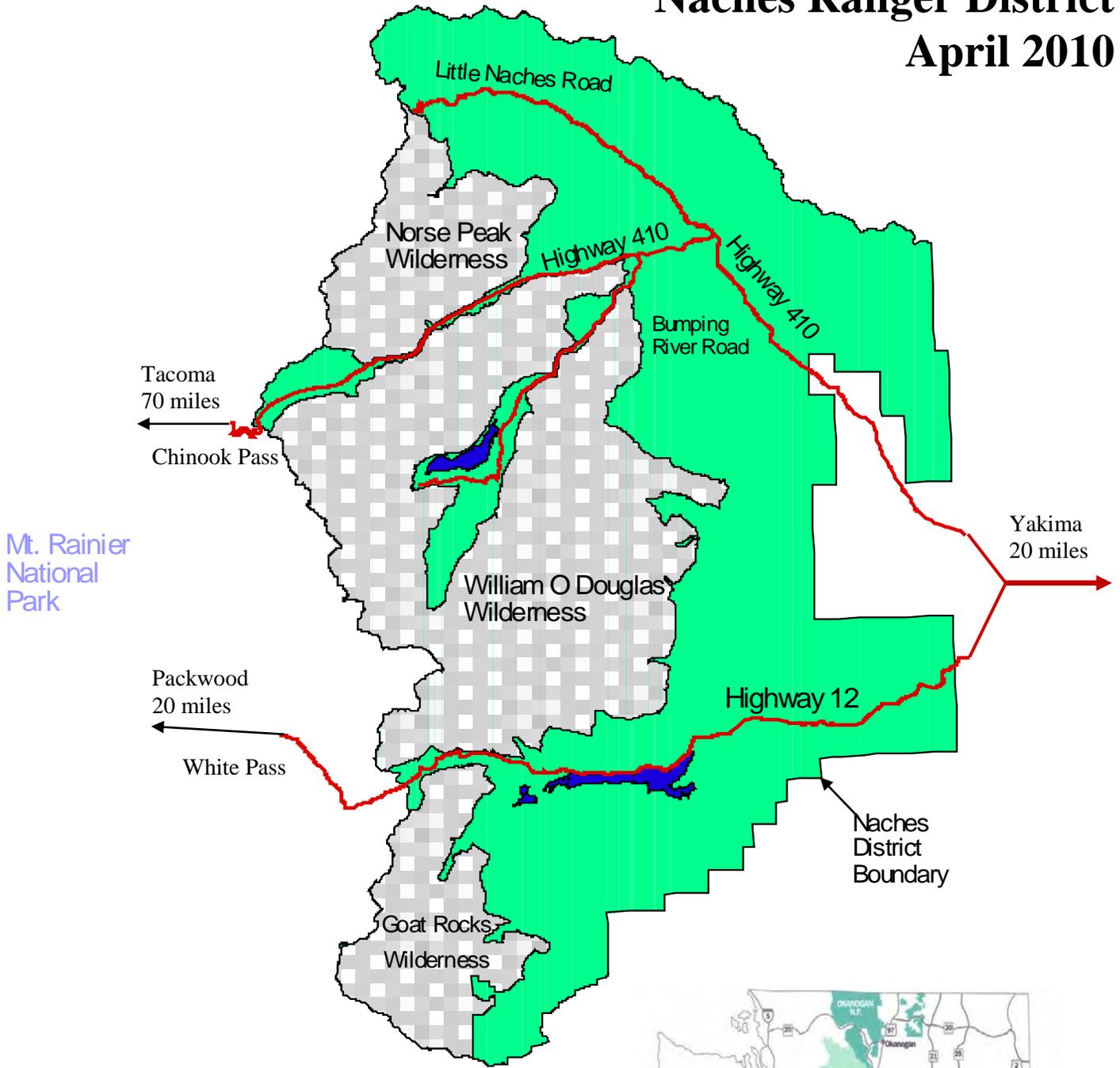
Naches Motorized Trails M&O 2011-2012

Project #10-1576

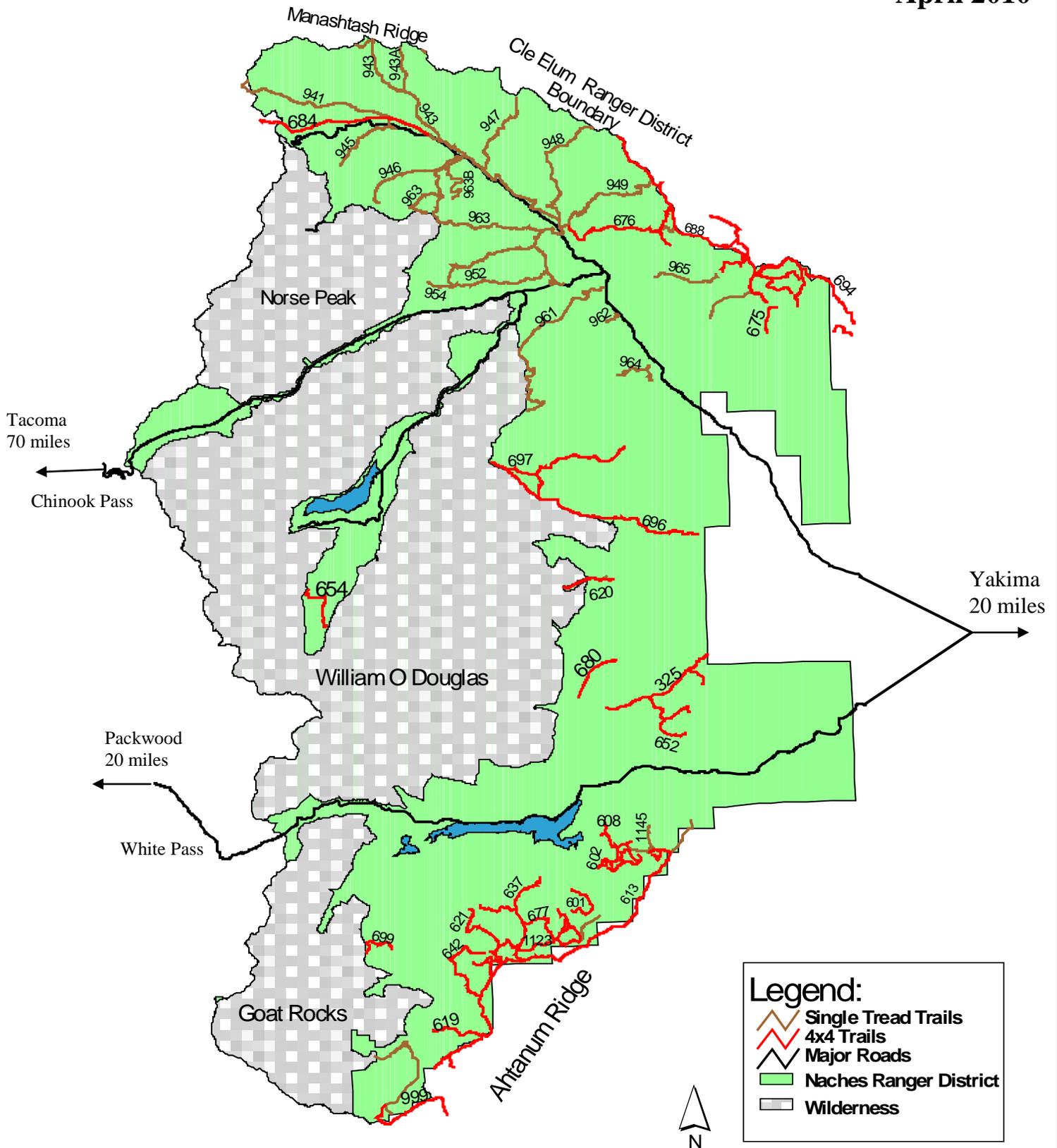
Regional Location Map

Naches Ranger District

April 2010



Naches Motorized Trails M&O 2011-2012
Project #10-1576
Site Location Map & Site Plan Map
Naches Ranger District
April 2010



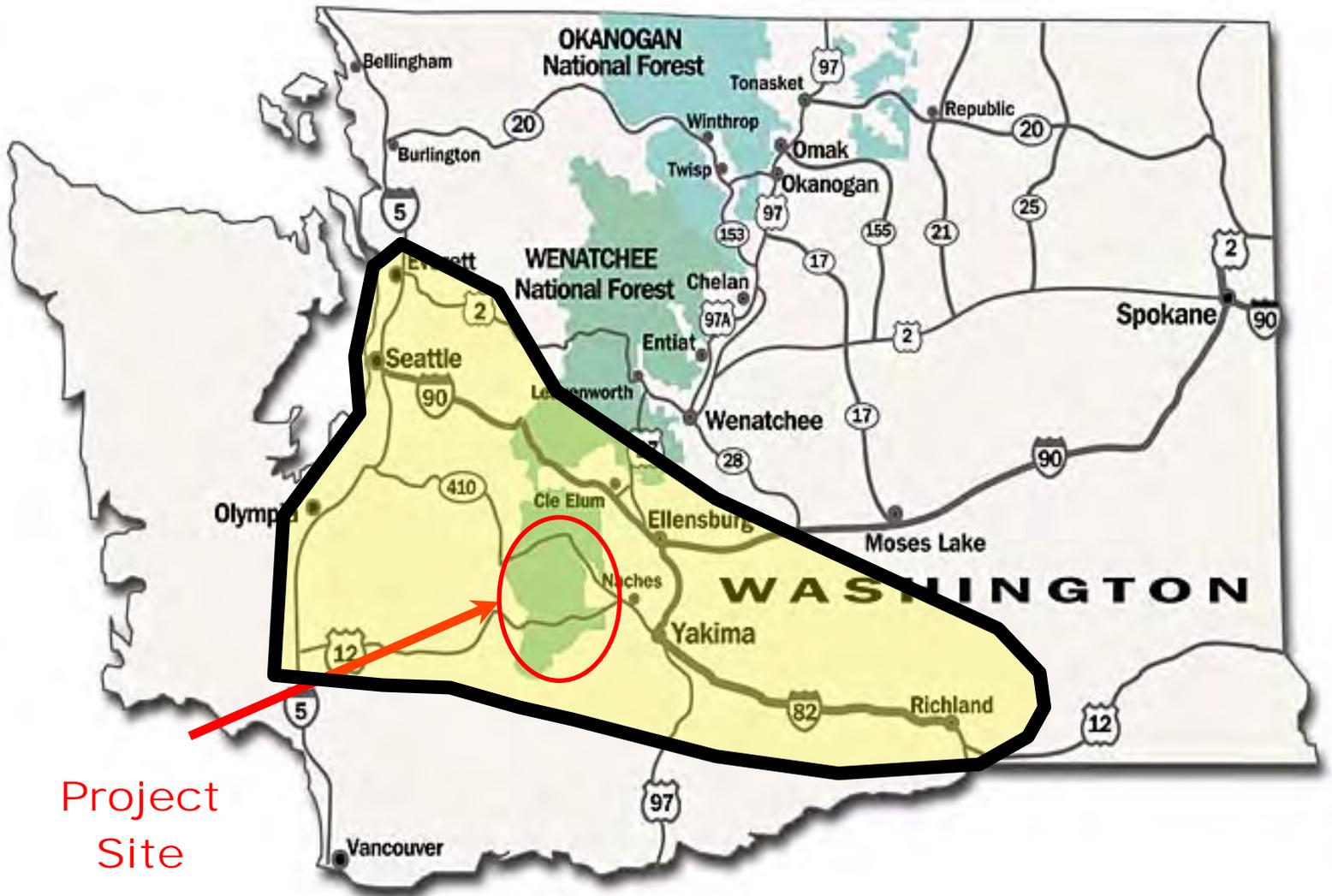
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Service Area Map

Naches Ranger District

April 2010



**Naches Motorized Trails M&O 2011-2012
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The type of equipment used to maintain the motorized trail system is specific to each situation

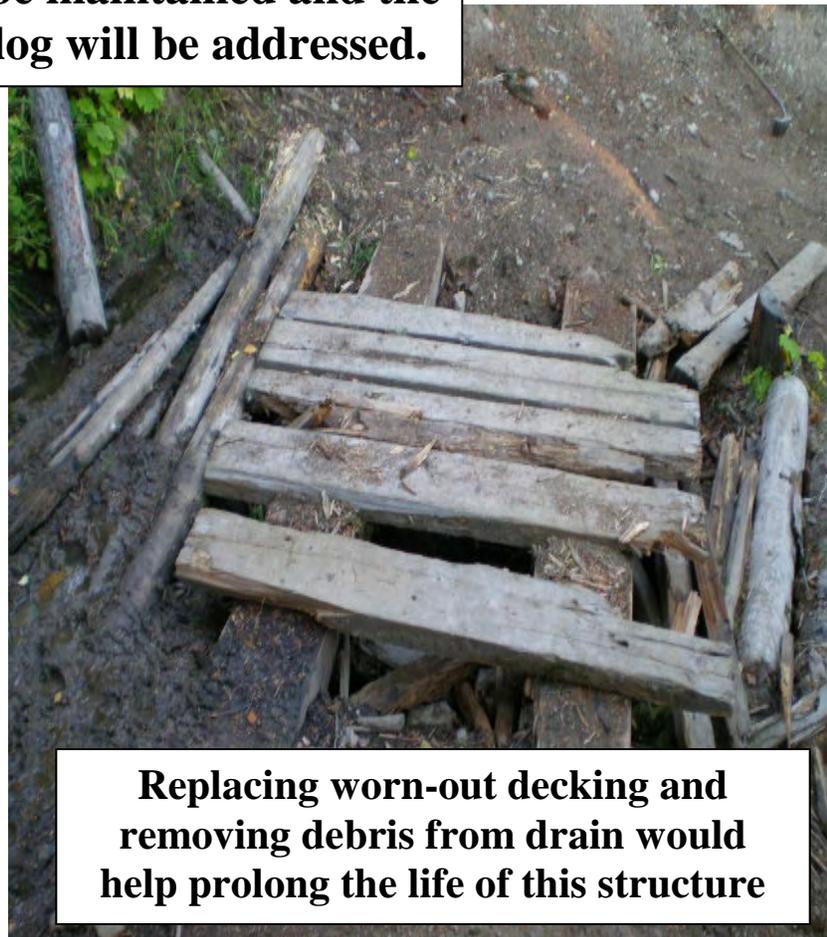


Volunteer labor is a vital part of our program

**Naches Motorized Trails M&O 2011-2012
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Clearing and tread work will be done throughout the 250+ mile trail system. All structures will be maintained and the maintenance backlog will be addressed.



Replacing worn-out decking and removing debris from drain would help prolong the life of this structure

Photos by ANDY SAWYER/Yakima Herald-Republic