



# Public Scoping

Relocation of the Stehekin Valley Road at Milepost 5.5

Environmental Assessment

December 2020/January 2021

## Public Input Sought on Relocation of the Stehekin Valley Road at Milepost 5.5

Sedro Woolley, WA – The public is invited to comment on a preliminary proposal to reroute approximately 0.25 miles of the Stehekin Valley Road at milepost 5.5 in Lake Chelan National Recreation Area. The National Park Service (NPS) is planning this project in partnership with the Federal Highways Administration (FHWA).

Per the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), North Cascades National Park Service Complex intends to prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA) to analyze the effects of the proposal and the no action alternative.

Feedback on the proposed action, environmental issues that should be addressed, other potential alternatives, and sources of data that should be considered by the NPS are requested. Comments will be accepted December 1, 2020 through January 14, 2021.

Comment at:

<https://parkplanning.nps.gov/StehekinRoadReloScoping2020>

Or hardcopy comments mailed to:

Superintendent  
810 State Route 20  
Sedro Woolley, WA 98284

Substantive public comments will assist in shaping the alternatives in the EA and the assessment of impacts. The EA will be provided for public review in March 2021.

### Proposal

The National Park Service (NPS) in partnership with the Federal Highways Administration (FHWA) propose to reroute approximately 0.25 miles of the Stehekin Valley Road at milepost (MP) 5.5 in Lake Chelan National Recreation Area.

### Purpose and Need for Action

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to sustainably maintain safe and reliable vehicle access on the Stehekin Valley Road by addressing the threat of erosion along the road previously damaged near MP 5.5. Maintaining this access is essential for local

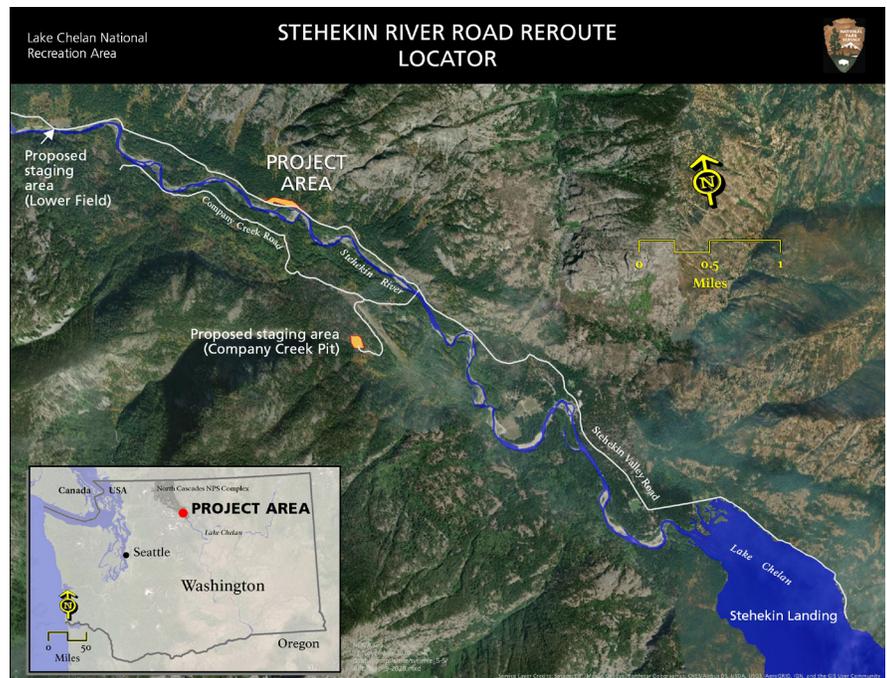


Figure 1. Map showing the location of the proposed project area near milepost 5.5 of the Stehekin Valley Road in Lake Chelan National Recreation Area.

transportation needs and ensuring the health and safety of the local populace, NPS employees, and visitors. This proposal is aligned with the purpose of the [2013 Stehekin River Corridor Implementation Plan](#) and the goals and direction provided in the [1995 Lake Chelan National Recreation Area General Management Plan](#).

## Background

The Stehekin Valley Road is owned and maintained by the NPS and is the sole vehicular connection for federal and private lands for 12.9 miles from the Stehekin Landing along the Stehekin River (Figure 1). The Stehekin Valley Road provides access and egress to multiple private properties and businesses, fire and emergency services, public utilities maintenance, NPS administration, and public access to federal lands for recreational activities

During a November 2017 storm event, the Stehekin River undercut the north bank near MP 5.5 of the road causing two large maple trees to topple toward the river. The bank erosion and collapse of the tree roots severely damaged the southbound lane of the road including the road base and pavement (Figure 2).

Temporary stabilization of the road was accomplished by placing 90-cubic yards of boulders on top of the root wads from the fallen trees above the ordinary high-water line. This temporary bank stabilization measure is anticipated to last less than five years, depending on flooding and movement of large wood pieces and deposition of gravel upstream of the site. The longevity of the existing stabilization is completely dependent on the timing of the next flood event, which could come as soon as this winter or next spring.



Figure 2. Stehekin Valley Road at MP 5.5 showing damaged area of road.

At this location, the road bisects private property and the eroded riverbank is on this private property. Given the recent movement of the main channel of the river toward the side channel along the road, it is likely that more erosion problems will develop downstream.

## Proposed Action

The proposed reroute would move the road away from the vulnerable area near the Stehekin River and out of private property to an upland location through NPS-managed forested lands (Figure 3). The dimensions of the proposed realignment are two 8-ft lanes with no shoulders. The realignment will require clearing approximately 2.0 acres of trees and brush. To ensure the road meets the vertical grade standard of less than 4%, minimal

cut and fill will be required with the goal to balance the cut and fill as much as possible. This approach will minimize the added cost and noise of transporting construction materials to and through the remote Stehekin community. The final road surface is expected to be a chip seal or similar type of material to match the current surface. Exposed slopes will be revegetated as quickly as possible to minimize the potential for erosion and undermining of the new road subgrade. The old unused road will be abandoned by the NPS. Access for the impacted property owner is anticipated to be from the west side. Chelan Public Utility District (PUD) manages some utility poles and lines that carry electricity to the private property following the eastern side of what would be the abandoned road. The NPS will work with the property owner and PUD to assure continued access and electrical service.

FHWA would administer the construction contract for the project. To secure the most cost-effective construction price and efficient schedule, requirements for construction methods are kept to a minimum and are left to the contractor to determine. However, NPS and FHWA will impose conditions on the contract such as timing restrictions (e.g., sensitive species breeding seasons) and other mitigation measures (e.g., use of weed-free fill) for resource protection and to meet requirements of various environmental clearances and permits.

A precise construction schedule in terms of number of days, seasons and daily work schedule will not be known until after a contract is awarded. The work would take approximately 60 days to complete with the goal of completion in one construction season, although the project may span two seasons if necessary. A general rule of thumb is the more work that can be performed in the summer when there is more daylight, allowing more hours in the construction shifts and warmer temperatures for chip seal, then the quicker a job can be completed. No road closures are anticipated although there may be some traffic delays.

Two staging locations outside of the reroute area (Figure 1) are anticipated to store equipment and materials: 1) the existing pit off Company Creek Road that is west of the Stehekin Landing strip (Company Creek Pit); and 2) a previously disturbed field at MP 7.5 (locally known as Lower Field). Logistics such as barging, local equipment transport, and temporary lodging would be determined by the contractor. The following construction equipment should be anticipated for use in the construction activities: pickup trucks and trailers, refueling and maintenance trucks, skid-steer, track mounted excavator, motor grader, low-boy trailer and transport.

Timber from the cleared area would be utilized for firewood (as stipulated in the Stehekin Firewood Management Plan), shredded to use for soil stabilization in revegetation areas, stockpiled for future riverbank stabilization projects, and any excess would be burned in a burn pile.

## **Other Alternatives**

The No Action alternative will be evaluated in the EA against the proposed action. In this alternative the NPS would take no action to try to stabilize the riverbank or road. Erosion would likely close the road within five years. However, it is difficult to predict when this would happen and depends on the severity, frequency, and timing of future flood events.

## Alternatives Considered but Dismissed from Detailed Analysis

A slight variation of the Road reroute would have the new road exit the existing road 300 feet to the east (Figure 3). This was considered but dismissed from detailed analysis because it would delay implementation of an urgent project and add expense that is unfeasible given current budget constraints. That alignment would require a new solution for aquatic organism passage where a small spring-fed stream crosses the road (stream S-1 on Figure 3), meaning additional geotechnical surveys and added permitting, design, and construction complexity.

Maintaining the road in the current alignment was considered but dismissed because this would require further stabilization of the riverbank and likely ongoing additions and repairs to bank stabilization structures due to erosion from future flood events. This is not considered a sustainable solution and therefore is dismissed.

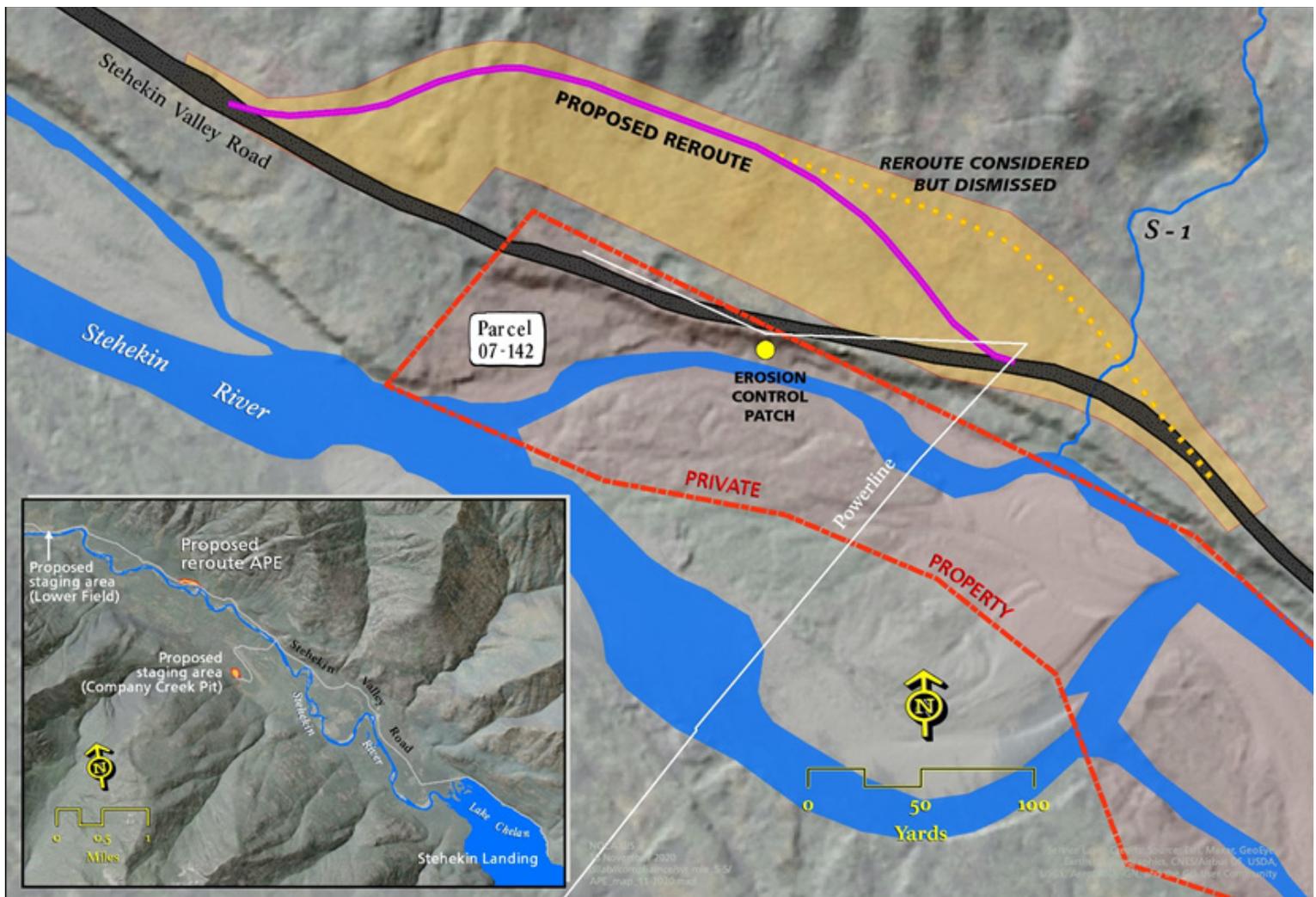


Figure 3. Map showing the shaded relief topography of the project area, the Area of Potential Effect (APE; in orange), existing road, alignment options for the road reroute, the private land parcel, approximate powerline alignment, and location of Stehekin River.