Index-Galena Road is located along the North Fork Skykomish River in the Mount Baker – Snoqualmie National Forest in southeast Snohomish County. In the fall of 2006 it was severely damaged by flooding at eight separate locations, including between Mile Posts (MP) 6.4 and 6.9. Since 2006 the road has been closed approximately 5.5 miles east of the Town of Index.

Limited access to the area is available from the east by using Beckler River Road, a Forest Service road from U.S 2 that goes to Jack’s Pass. Another road then goes down from the pass to the North Fork Skykomish River valley and intersects with Index-Galena Road. The detour route is available only seasonally and provides the only access for property owners, emergency services and recreational users to camp sites and hiking trails. Currently there is a locked gate at the eastern end of Index-Galena Road. Only property owners have access beyond this point. After the repairs at MP 10.9 are completed, the gate may be moved further down the road to provide public vehicle access to the campgrounds.

Since the flooding in 2006, Snohomish County has been coordinating with the U.S. Forest Service, Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to determine a safe, reliable, and cost-effective solution for restoring the connection between the east and west portions of the road, while limiting impacts to the surrounding environment. The topography of the area is rugged, with steep slopes and high gradient streams. Relocating the roadway through this mountainous terrain presents design and access challenges and requires long cut and fill slopes, as well as walls and culverts.

One alignment is chosen

The decision has been made with concurrence of FHWA to relocate the road slightly above the existing alignment into the adjacent hillside – Alternative #3 (see page 2). The team considered and compared the five alternatives based on preliminary information regarding: environmental impacts, permitting requirements, right-of-way needs, structural considerations and estimated project costs.

It is estimated that retaining walls will need to be constructed along at least one-tenth of the length of the new roadway. This alternative will restore the roadway connectivity for the area, move the roadway outside of the 100-year flood zone and channel migration zone, and minimize impacts to the surrounding natural environment in the most cost-effective manner.
Design Report is posted at www.snoco.org, search “Index-Galena”

Public Works completed the design report in March 2011. It is posted on the project web page. The Design Report includes results of the broad-based assessment of the following five alternatives that led to the decision:

1. No action, except to install turn-arounds at the washout sites and remove asphalt from the river - $495,900
2. Rebuild on the existing Index-Galena Road alignment - $26,404,000
3. Relocate above the existing alignment into the adjacent hillside with 10% walls - 15,659,800
4. Relocate above the existing alignment into the adjacent hillside with 50% walls - $21,571,600
5. Relocate to an upper alignment on the adjacent hillside - $34,932,500

What happens next?

Now that Alternative #3 road alignment has been chosen, the team is able to proceed with the more detailed data gathering and design work that is needed for the local, state and federal approvals and funding to build the road. The information will also be used to refine more specifically the horizontal and vertical path of the road. The work includes:

- Mapping the topography of the project corridor
- Locating and mapping all streams and wetlands within the project corridor
- Geotechnical and seismic investigations: analyzing core samples of the soils along the route to determine stability, permeability and other characteristics
- Geotechnical and seismic data will also help determine where and how slopes need to be stabilized and walls built
- Preparing environmental studies and reports
- Preparing a Biological Assessment to determine potential project impacts to threatened, endangered, and sensitive species and their habitats, and how to minimize or mitigate these impacts
- Identifying extent of clearing impacts
- Performing a cultural resource survey of the area of potential effect
- Determining how to minimize impacts to the environment, and for impacts that cannot be avoided, developing mitigation plans. Examples could include restoring the area of the existing damaged roadway by removing asphalt and underlying gravel, and planting native vegetation
- Reviewing the channel migration zone limits based on geotechnical and seismic analyses
- Refining the roadway drainage plan

Repairs planned for 2011

Emergency repairs to protect the road were made earlier at MP 3.0 and MP 10.9 in response to more recent flood damage. Snohomish County plans to complete those repairs this summer if all permits and funding comes together. The county has the necessary permits for the work at MP 10.9 and is awaiting final authorization from the federal government.

A new rock embankment will be constructed and the road will be paved and restored to two lanes. After the repairs at MP 10.9 are completed, the locked gate at the east end of the Skyko community of homes may be moved further down the road to provide vehicle access to the campgrounds when they are open.

The project at MP 3.0 will be funded through Snohomish County’s Road Fund. We are waiting for final permit approvals. The work would include repairing the road with rock and pavement, similar to repairs at MP 10.9. Wood from downed trees would also be installed along the bank to provide a bioengineering approach to erosion control.
Timeline

2006
- November flooding damaged eight sections of the road, blocking access from the Town of Index due to the major washout between MP 6.4 and 6.9

2007
- May Public Meeting to show details of the damage and discuss next steps
- Project team took state and federal representatives to the damaged sites and held meetings to discuss requirements for permitting process and possible funding of large washout area between MP 6.4 and MP 6.9
- Snohomish County Road Maintenance crews repaired eight damage sites: Index Bridge at MP 1.0; and MP’s: 10.5, 11.0, 11.9, 12.8, 13.1, 13.8, and 14.2.
- Interim repairs were made at MP 10.9
- Project team coordinated with federal agencies regarding the future design and environmental review process for the long term washout repair from milepost 6.4 to 6.9
- Funding approved for preliminary engineering/feasibility study for MP 6.4 to MP 6.9
- Work on preliminary design and feasibility study began in October

2008
- County Road Maintenance crews placed large rock at MP 3.0 to protect the road from high flow river erosion. Some of the damaged asphalt and concrete curbing at MP 7.0 was removed as part of the mitigation for the MP 10.9 interim repair.

2009
- Team evaluated several alignment options
- Feasibility Study issued, alternatives recommended for further review in a Design Report
- July Public Open House held to present results of the Feasibility Study

2010
- Project team preparing design report of alternatives recommended in Feasibility Study.
- Minor repairs made at MP 10.5

2011
- Repairs at MP 10.9 and MP 3.0 planned for the summer, dependent on permits and funding
- Design Report issued and Alternative #3 selected for final design
- Public Open House

You’re Invited to the May 31 Open House

Project team members will be available at the open house to answer your questions and discuss the project with you. Exhibits will be set up around the room and results of the Design Report will be available. The open house is scheduled for May 31, 6–7:30 p.m. at the Monroe Public Library, 1070 Village Way. There will not be a formal presentation; you may arrive anytime during the open house.

The Design Report has been submitted to the funding and permitting agencies for review and is posted on the project web page: www.snoco.org, search “Index-Galena.” You may register on the project web page to receive e-mail updates as new information is posted. Comment forms will be available at the open house.

Forest Service contacts:
- Skykomish Ranger Station, (360) 677-2414, covers the North Fork Skykomish River area.
- Verlot Public Service Center, (360) 691-7791, 8am – 4pm, Thursday through Monday, or Eric Ozog at eozog@fs.fed.us
- Darrington Ranger Station, (360) 436-1155, Mon-Sat, 8am - 4:30pm, covers the Mt. Loop and Suiattle River area.
- Forest Service Campgrounds information are listed on http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/mbs or at the HooDoo website at http://www.hoodoo.com
Index-Galena Road Update

Note: visitors to the area of the project must exercise extreme caution when traveling the roads, including Index-Galena Road itself, and watch for slides, washouts, undermined sections of roadway, etc. It is a good idea to carry emergency supplies as a precaution. Access beyond the gate is restricted to property owners and not given to the general public.