

DECISION MEMO
Big Game Campground Relocation

USDA Forest Service
Shoshone National Forest
North Zone/Wapiti Ranger District

Project Identification: N0202

Park County, Wyoming

T52N, R106W, Portions of Sections 21,22

Decision

I have reviewed the environmental analysis and public comments and my decision is to implement the No Action Alternative for the relocation of the Big Game Campground at this time. The Shoshone National Forest will operate and maintain this facility under existing management in the near future, subject to constraints such as budget and personnel, changing priorities, contracting, impacts of fire season, etc. and an upcoming comprehensive overview and evaluation of the developed recreation program [Recreation Facilities Master Plan] on the Shoshone National Forest.

I want to emphasize that the cost effectiveness of operation and maintenance of the Big Game Campground will be revisited as part of a pending overall evaluation of the Shoshone National Forest developed recreation facilities. It is possible that this review of cost-effectiveness, future budget projections, etc. in the context of making the Forest developed recreation program more efficient could result in a future decision to close and/or relocate the campground following additional public involvement.

This action falls under 1909.15 Chapter 31.1b(4) of the Forest Service Handbook on Environmental Policy and Procedures.

(5) Repair and maintenance of recreation sites and facilities.

This category, that does not generally require documentation in a project file or decision memo, is one established by the Chief of the Forest Service. We have decided to complete a decision memo for this action under the discretion provided to us because the Forest proposed to close and relocate the facility and had scoped the proposal with the public.

This action falls under the “repair and maintenance of recreation sites and facilities” wording of this category because the major emphasis of the order is to protect public safety by performing needed maintenance to operate recreation sites and facilities.

The rationale for choosing the No Action Alternative at this time is funding for the relocating the 16 sites from the Big Game Campground as proposed is not available; so my decision at this time will not close and relocate the Big Game campground to the Wapiti Campground. The effects of implementing this action will be of limited context and intensity and will result in little or no environmental effects to either the physical or biological components of the environment. The decision to close and relocate the campground could be made in the future.

Background and Proposed Action

The project is located in Park County at T52N, R106W, portions of section 21 and 22. The location is approximately 25 miles west of Cody, Wyoming on U.S. Highway 14, roughly halfway between Cody and the east entrance to Yellowstone National Park in the North Fork of the Shoshone River corridor.

Proposed Action for Relocating Big Game Campground

The proposal is known as the Big Game Campground Relocation. Use levels at the Big Game campground are currently the lowest of any developed campground on the North Fork Shoshone River corridor. It would be more efficient to combine the Big Game campground with the Wapiti campground. The proposed project involved the relocation of the sixteen (16) developed campsites from the Big Game campground to the nearby Wapiti campground. The Wapiti campground is currently being redesigned/reconstructed and the additional campsites could be incorporated into the new design.

Reasons for Categorically Excluding the Proposed Action

The routine, proposal falls under Section 31.1b of the Forest Service Handbook 1909.15 – Environmental Policy and Procedures Handbook. Based on internal and external scoping, field reviews, specialist’s input and past experience, and project design measures, the effects of implementing this action will be of limited context and intensity and will result in little or no environmental effects to either the physical or biological components of the environment. The categorical exclusion is appropriate in this situation because there are no extraordinary circumstances potentially having effects that may significantly affect the environment.

Forest Plan Direction/Findings Required by Other Laws

This proposal is consistent with laws, regulations, and policy, as well as standards and guidelines in the Shoshone National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP). The management area is 2B, where the primary management direction is to provide for the rural and roaded recreation opportunities. This decision is in accordance with other applicable federal regulations and laws.

Scoping and Public Involvement

Issues and Concerns. To gather comments and suggestions, a scoping letter was sent out to solicit written comments from all concerned parties. Project alternatives and project design were shaped by this public comment and input and environmental consequences analyzed during the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process initiated by the scoping letter.

A proposal to implement the Big Game Campground Relocation has been listed in the Schedule of Proposed Actions since fall 2001. On December 7, 2001, letters were sent to approximately 180 individuals and 28 American Indian tribal contacts to scope their ideas and identify issues and concerns associated with the project and alternatives/opportunities for implementation. About a dozen comments were received, some supported the proposal to close and relocate the campground and others opposed it. Park County supported the No Action Alternative and opposed the relocation of the campground.

Possible Alternatives

- No Action Alternative – the current situation and management would continue and the proposed action would not be implemented. The proposal to close and relocate the campground would not be implemented.
- Alternative 2, remove the water system and leave the campground open as a dry, primitive camping area
- Alternative 3-the proposed action, to close and relocate the campsite.

No other actions or alternatives were identified that would meet the need.

This decision is being distributed to interested and potentially affected parties, including those who responded during the scoping process.

Finding of No Extraordinary Circumstances

Under the Forest Service Handbook definition, extraordinary circumstances exist, only when *conditions* associated with the proposed action or alternatives are identified “as potentially having effects which may

significantly affect the environment.” Scoping was conducted to identify any conditions associated with a normally excluded action as potentially having effects, which may significantly affect the environment.

Extraordinary circumstances include, but are not limited to, steep slopes or highly erosive soils, threatened and endangered species or their critical habitat, wetlands and flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds, inventoried roadless areas, Congressionally designated areas (such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or National Recreation Areas), Research Natural Areas, or Native American religious or cultural sites, archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas. Determinations for extraordinary circumstances were reviewed in the context of the Forest Service Handbook (1909.15 Chapter 30.3-30.5) and definition and the court decision below. Extraordinary circumstances exist, or are “present,” only when *conditions* associated with the proposed action are identified “as potentially having effects which may significantly affect the environment.”

Summary

I have reviewed the proposal and determined that no extraordinary circumstances exist and no significant effects would occur from its implementation. The effects of the actions, as determined through internal scoping, are not highly controversial and are similar to other actions that have been implemented in the area. The effects on the human environment are not highly uncertain or involve unique risks.

Implementation of the No Action Alternative would continue the operation of the Big Game campground and is a routine facility maintenance project; the Forest Service and others have been maintaining such facilities for years with predictable results. The action is not related to any actions that would result in significant cumulative impacts. The project does not represent a decision in principle about future considerations and does not violate federal, state, or local laws or requirements imposed for protection of the environment.

Administrative Review or Appeal Opportunities

This decision can be implemented immediately and is not subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 215.8 (a) (4).

Implementation and Contacts

For further information on the project, contact project leader Thad Harper at 307-527-6241.

For further information on this decision, contact Marty Sharp, NEPA Coordinator, 203A Yellowstone Ave., Cody, Wyoming 82414, or telephone 307-527-6921.

/s/ Dave Sisk

06/23/03

Dave Sisk
Acting District Ranger

Date

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