

DECISION MEMO

For

2004 TRAIL MAINTENANCE AND IMPROVEMENTS

BRIDGER-TETON NATIONAL FOREST

Greys River Ranger District

LINCOLN COUNTY, WYOMING
USDA FOREST SERVICE

Decision

I have decided to approve re-routing segments and trail maintenance on three trails on the Greys River Ranger District for the 2004 season:

- Wickiup Knoll: Trail #191 is 4.4 miles long and located 4 miles SE of Afton, south of Dry Canyon.
- Murphy Creek to Squaw Creek: Trail #183 is 6.8 miles long and located approximately 26.5 miles North of Afton.
- Dry Creek Lake to Trail Fork Trail: Trail #182 is 8 miles SE of Afton and is approximately 3.8 miles long

Trail maintenance includes constructing drainage structures (waterbars, culverts, etc), signing, brushing-out trails, adding and replacing trail markers and closing/rehabilitating "short-cut" trails that are causing resource damage. Steep portions on 2.0 miles of the Murphy Creek to Squaw Creek trail will be re-routed to improve user safety and reduce erosion. The re-routed portion of trail will be constructed as a switchback within 200 feet of the original trail. Work on the trails will be accomplished using a trail dozer and trail backhoe to close trails, and pulaskis, rock bars, shovels, and chainsaws for brushing-out and light trail improvements.

Rational For Decision

These improvements are intended to reduce soil loss and reduce future trail maintenance cost. These trails receive high public use, and improvements such as signs/markers, tread, width, and drainage will benefit the users and improve safety. Best management practices for trail construction and maintenance as described in the Trails Management Handbook (FSH 2309.18) will be implemented to reduce erosion and sedimentation benefiting wildlife, fisheries, and vegetation. Providing improved trails will also aid the Forest Service and the state in promoting and encouraging responsible trail use.

Scoping and Public Involvement

Public comment (scoping) on the project was conducted from March 4 to April 5, 2004. Letters were sent to 28 individuals and agencies and posted on the Forest web site. Three written comments and one phone comment was received during the comment period. Two of the written comments and the phone conversation were from regulatory agencies

conveying information regarding the clean Water Act and the Endangered Species Act. Both of these subjects are covered in the Specialist Reports. The third comment was from a user group affirming the project. All comments are located in the project file.

Categorical Exclusion

The Forest Service Environmental Policy and Procedures Handbook (1909.15, Chapter 30) provides that a proposed action may be categorically excluded in an Environmental Impact Statement or Environmental Assessment only if the action is within a category listed in section 31 and there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action. This action falls within category 31.2(1): “Construction and reconstruction of trails”.

In review of these projects, a “test for extraordinary circumstances” was conducted that included conclusions on the following resources:

Threatened or endangered species or their critical habitat, or species proposed for federal listing or proposed critical habitat or Forest Service sensitive species– A biological evaluation, which considers potential impacts these projects may have on threatened, endangered, and sensitive (TES) plant and wildlife species and their habitats was prepared by the Forest Service biologist (see project file). The analysis concluded that there will be “no effect” for Federally Threatened and Endangered Species and “no impact” to Forest Service Intermountain Region designated Sensitive terrestrial and aquatic species.

Flood Plains, wetlands, or municipal watershed: The Forest Service Hydrologist evaluated the project and determined that normal trail maintenance will not have a negative impact on watershed conditions. Re-routing portions of Murphy creek to Squaw creek trail will reduce overall soil erosion and sedimentation into area streams.

Congressionally designated areas, such as wilderness, wilderness study areas or National Recreation areas: The project areas are not designated or proposed wilderness.

Inventoried roadless area: Wickiup Knoll (Trail #191) and Murphy Creek trail (Trail #183) are in areas classified as roaded. Dry Creek Lake to Trail Fork is in a roadless area. The continued use of this trail, combined with the maintenance proposed, will not change the character of the area and remains consistent with the management area goal to emphasize semi primitive recreation opportunities while maintaining and protecting other forest resources.

Research Natural Areas: There are no research natural areas within this proposal.

American Indians religious or cultural sites and archaeological or historic properties or areas: There are no resources or “use” rights reserved under Treaty for American Indians in the project area. There are no known or recorded cultural sites in direct conflict with the proposed action. If significant archeological sites are identified, the Forest Archaeologist will prescribe avoidance measures. If necessary, mitigation measures will be addressed through the NHPA Section 106 process.

Laws and Regulations

- The project addressed under this decision is consistent with the 1990 Bridger-Teton National Forest Plan goals and objectives described for the management areas where activities will occur.
- The proposed action is consistent with the Endangered Species Act of 1973.
- The proposal is consistent with the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 as amended.
- The proposal complies with the Environmental Justice Executive Order 12898.
- The project areas were reviewed and cleared by the Forest archeologist (see project file).
- The project is consistent with the Clean Water Act of 1972 as amended in 1977 and 1987.

Implementation and Review

Pursuant to 36 CFR 215.4, this decision is not subject to notice, comment and appeal procedures. Implementation of this decision may begin immediately.

Detailed records of the analysis are included in a project file available for public review at the Greys River Ranger District, Afton, WYO. 83110. For further information on the decision, contact David Fogle by letter (Greys River Ranger District, 125 Washington Street, Afton, Wyoming, 83110), by telephone 307-885-3166, or by e-mail (dfogle@fs.fed.us).

/s/CFBuchaGentry

Charlene Bucha Gentry
District Ranger
Greys River RD

7/02/2004

Date