

DECISION MEMO

Cascade Springs Boardwalk Replacement

USDA – Forest Service
Uinta National Forest
Pleasant Grove Ranger District
Wasatch County, Utah

1. INTRODUCTION

Cascade Springs is located in the headwaters for the Provo River above its confluence with the South Fork Deer Creek. The springs at this site are quite extensive and represent a fairly unique habitat in the general sense for this area. The springs cover an area of about 10 acres and flow year-round. The Cascade Springs Interpretive Site and Boardwalk was initially developed in the mid-1960s as a Land and Water Conservation Fund project. This interpretive site lies within the eligible Lower Provo Deer Creek (recreational river) wild and scenic river.

Since its initial development, natural weathering of the concrete footings and wood boardwalk materials has occurred, and the boardwalk is showing wear and tear from years of foot traffic. The structural integrity of the footings has reached a point where they should be replaced because some of them are exhibiting excessive spalling (flaking of exterior surface of the concrete). Replacement of the footings could be achieved on a case-by-case basis as the footings reach a point that they are no longer structurally sound. This would require a piecemeal effort at maintaining the facility and would not be cost effective. New materials will be used to rebuild the boardwalk structure following replacement of the footings.

2. PROPOSED ACTION

The proposed project involves replacement of the footings and boardwalk for the Cascade Springs Interpretive Site. The Interpretive Site is located at the east end of the Cascade Springs Road (FSR #70114); about six miles east of the Alpine Scenic Loop Road (SR 92), in T.4S., R.3E., Section 24, SLB&M. The turnoff for SR92 is about six miles from the mouth of Provo Canyon. The proposal is to replace the original footings in kind and reinstall the boardwalk, keeping the entire boardwalk on its original location. Specific actions associated with this proposal include:

1. Removal of the existing boardwalk structure to provide access to the footings for replacement.
2. Replacement of all existing concrete and natural stone footings with new 12-inch diameter concrete footings in about the same locations and at a minimum of 8-

foot intervals. Where possible, pre-cast concrete footings will be used to minimize potential for impacts to water quality.

3. New concrete footings would be cast in place using sonotubes cut to match the existing boardwalk grades and elevations. Minimal, if any, ground disturbance is expected.
4. Installation of new boardwalk structure following installation of the footings.
5. Access to the work area would be via the existing trail and boardwalk from the parking lot. Hauling and construction equipment operating on the boardwalk, paths, and bridges would be limited to rubber tired hand operated wheel barrows.
6. All concrete mixing would be conducted at the Cascade Springs Interpretive Site parking lot and transported to the worksite by hand operated wheel barrow. Mixing equipment would not be allowed adjacent to or near the water course.
7. All drilling, sawing, cutting and sizing of wood materials for reconstruction of the boardwalk would be conducted on the parking lot as well. No construction material or debris would be allowed to enter the natural water zone.

All activities would be conducted during periods of low water flow to avoid potential impacts to spawning brown trout and (Bonneville) cutthroat trout that are known to be in the Cascade Springs area and in the waters downstream.

3. PURPOSE AND NEED

The *Purpose* of the proposed action is to replace boardwalk facilities at the Cascade Springs Interpretive Site. The *Need* for the proposed action is:

1. Address the deferred maintenance needs for this facility
2. Be most cost efficient in replacement of both the footings and boardwalk structure.
3. Address the safety hazard associated with continued deterioration of the concrete footings that support the boardwalk.

4. SCOPING AND PUBLIC INVOLVMENT

The Pleasant Grove Ranger District initiated scoping for this proposal by issuing a scoping letter on May 21, 2004 which was sent to about 90 known interested parties. The proposed project was also listed in the Uinta National Forest's "Schedule of Proposed Actions", winter 2003-2004, and Spring 2004 editions. News releases and a legal notice for the project were also printed in the Provo Daily Herald (May 20 and May 25, 2004, respectfully). In response to these solicitations, the Forest received four

written comments. The project was also internally scoped. Based upon the public comments and interdisciplinary team review, the following issues were identified:

1. Removal and construction activities should be conducted during times of low flow to reduce potential impacts to spawning brown trout (generally from October 15 through May 15) and Bonneville cutthroat trout (early May through August).

All concrete mixing and cutting of boardwalk materials will be conducted on the Cascade Springs Interpretive Site parking lot. Removal of existing footings and boardwalk will include complete removal of all materials from the water course. Removal of the old footings will not involve ground-disturbing activities because they are all situated at ground level or on existing rock bases. Utilization of pre-cast concrete footings as replacement footings will also minimize impacts to the water course.

The potential for displacing spawning trout from their spawning grounds is fairly high if the amount of human activity within the area is high. Construction activities could result in such displacement of spawning trout. Additionally, any disturbance that adds sediment to the stream while eggs are incubating would pose a mortality threat to the eggs. Disturbance in the area after fry hatch could affect mortality if activities occur before the fry are wholly mobile. To avoid these potential impacts, but respond to actual conditions on the ground, water temperatures will be monitored to more precisely determine when spawning might occur and facilitate meeting the needs of the District to address the maintenance needs of this facility without being restricted by broad-based timing limitations.

2. Activities associated with this project should ensure that any sediment that enters the stream does not increase the turbidity downstream.

It is anticipated that no ground-disturbing activities will be associated with replacement of the footings because the new footings will be placed back on natural ground or on existing rock bases.

Access to the work area will be via the existing trail and boardwalk from the parking lot. Hauling and construction equipment operating on the boardwalk, paths, and bridges will be limited to rubber-tired hand-operated wheel barrows.

All concrete mixing will be conducted at the Cascade Springs Interpretive Site parking lot and transported to the worksite by hand-operated wheel barrow. Mixing equipment will not be allowed adjacent to or near the water course.

All drilling, sawing, cutting and sizing of wood materials for reconstruction of the boardwalk will be conducted on the parking lot as well. No construction material or debris will be allowed to enter the natural water zone.

3. The South Fork Deer Creek contains a whirling disease free population of Bonneville cutthroat trout, a Conservation Management Species. As whirling disease exists just downstream in the Provo River and Jordanelle Reservoir, it is imperative that this population remain disease free.

In order to limit the spread of this parasite, the Forest Service will follow the Fish and Wildlife Services recommendation to follow procedures outlined in the Utah State Division of Wildlife Resources brochure, Whirling Disease and Utah Trout, What Anglers Need To Know.

Other comments received included recommendation for preparation of an environmental assessment in order to address potential impacts on extraordinary circumstances (“ . . .extensive wetlands, riparian and aquatic habitat . . .”) wetlands, threatened and endangered species,

5. CATEGORICALLY EXCLUDING THIS PROPOSED ACTION

The proposed action is categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement or environmental assessment. Forest Service Handbook 1909.15 states that “a proposed action may be categorically excluded from documentation...only if the proposed action” ... “is within a category listed in section 31.1b or 31.2; and there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action.” (FSH 1909.15, section 30.3 (l)) The proposed action is specifically listed as one of the Forest Service Chief’s categories for categorical exclusion (Forest Service Handbook 1909.15, Section 31.1(b) (5) :

““Repair and maintenance of recreation sites and facilities.”

The proposed action fits this category as it is limited in scope to replacement in kind of the existing facilities at Cascade Springs.

FSH 1909.15, Section 30.3 (WO Interim 1909.15-2002-2) lists the following as ‘extraordinary circumstances’:

- a. Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species – The proposed project will have no impacts on any threatened or endangered plant or wildlife species or their habitats or on any of the Uinta National Forest identified Management Indicator Species. There are no known threatened or endangered plants or wildlife species within the proposed project area. Bonneville cutthroat trout (a Uinta National Forest Management Indicator Species and Region 4 Forest Service sensitive species) do occupy habitat at the Springs, but neither the species nor its habitat will be impacted through implementation of this proposed project. There is potential habitat for Ute Ladies’-tresses (threatened), slender moonwort and spotted frog (R4 Sensitive species). None of these species have been observed within the proposed project

area. The Biological Assessment and Evaluation determined that the proposed project will have no impact on the habitats for these species.

- b. Floodplains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds – The proposed boardwalk replacement project will have no impact on municipal watersheds. The project area does reside in, but would not have any direct, indirect or cumulative impacts on, any water bodies, floodplains, or wetlands.
- c. Congressionally designated areas, such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or national recreation areas – The project area does not reside in, and the project will not have any direct, indirect or cumulative impacts on, any congressionally designated areas. It does reside in a river segment identified as eligible for designation as a recreational river under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. However, this project will have no impact on the river’s eligibility as no modification of the area will result from this project.
- d. Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRAs) – The project area is not located within an IRA. The project will not have any direct, indirect or cumulative impacts on any inventoried roadless areas.
- e. Research natural areas – The project area does not reside in, and the project will not have any direct, indirect or cumulative impacts on any research natural areas.
- f. American Indians and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites – Based on site investigations and scoping, the project area is not known to include, and the project will not have any direct, indirect or cumulative impacts on, any American Indian religious or cultural sites.
- g. Archeological sites, or historic properties or areas – The project area does not reside in, and the project will not have any direct, indirect or cumulative impacts on, any archeological, historic properties or areas, or congressionally designated areas.

6. DECISION

I have decided to approve the proposal to replace the boardwalk facilities at the Cascade Springs Interpretive Site, including footings and boardwalk surface. Implementation of this project will include following mitigation recommendations as found in the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources brochure, *Whirling Disease and Utah Trout, What Anglers Need To Know.*

7. REASON FOR MY DECISION

The proposed action will be of limited context and intensity and capable of producing little or no significant environmental effects (**40 CFR 1508.4**) individually or cumulatively

on the quality of the human environment; is within a category listed in FSH 1909.15, Section 31. (b); and there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action.

- **Need to prepare an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement:** There are no impacts to ‘extraordinary circumstances’ that require preparation of an environmental assessment or an environmental impact statement. The description of projects that may be categorically excluded from documentation in an EA or EIS may be found in the Federal Register Vol. 67, No. 164/ Friday, August 23, 2002/Notices Section 30.3, paragraph 5.

8. FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS

The Cascade Springs lies within the Lower Provo Management Area as identified in the 2003 Uinta National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (2003 Forest Plan). The proposed project is consistent with Forest-wide and Management Area specific direction. The 2003 Forest Plan states the following:

- “Biologically diverse, sustainable ecosystems maintain or enhance habitats for native flora and fauna, forest and rangeland health, and watershed health.” (FW-Goal-2, pg 2-1)
- “Diverse and suitable recreational opportunities are provided responsive to public demand while maintaining ecosystem health and contributing to social and economic sustainability.” (FW-Goal-6, pg 2-1)
- “Opportunities for recreational, aesthetic, and educational experiences are provided while conserving special environmental, cultural, social, and/or scientific values in protected areas (e.g., congressionally designated wilderness; proposed wilderness; wild, scenic, and recreational river corridors; research natural areas; and caves).” (FW-Goal-9, pg 2-1)
- “Protect and maintain 10 conservation populations, 12 persistence populations, and one metapopulation (consisting of six water bodies in the Diamond Fork drainage) ^{of} Bonneville cutthroat trout within the Utah Lake/Provo River drainage of the Northern Bonneville Geographic Management Unit (GMU) (UDWR 1997a, p. 52).” (List includes South Fork Deer Creek as a stream to be managed for persistence of Bonneville cutthroat trout. (Table 2-1, Bonneville Cutthroat Trout Water bodies and Management Strategies), pg 2-8.)
- “Provide and maintain habitat to support native fish populations. (Sub-goal 2-39, pg2-11)
- Recreation facilities (including trails and dispersed sites) are designed, constructed, and operated in a manner that does not retard or prevent attainment of aquatic Forest Plan management direction.” (Sub-goal 2042, pg 2-11)

- “Recreation education and opportunity information is readily available to the public, and provided through a variety of communication methods.” (Sub-goal 6-13, pg 2-19)
- “Interpretation and education opportunities are provided at strategic locations throughout the Forest including visitor centers, scenic byways and backways, campgrounds, trailheads, day-use areas, . . . Themes include . . . unique features at specific sites. Through these opportunities, visitors gain an awareness and understanding of natural resources, natural resource management, and personal stewardship.” (Sub-goal 9-6, pg 2-24)
- **Aqua-4, Guideline:** Limit construction and other activities affecting stream channels to those periods when such activities will have the least detrimental effect on the aquatic environment, unless emergency conditions deem otherwise. (pg 3-2)
- **MP-2.3-7 Guideline:** Recreation developments (e.g., visitor centers, restrooms, parking areas, interpretive sites, and hardened access trails) may be provided. . . . “ (pg 3-41)
- **MP-4.4-1 Guideline:** Recreation and non-recreation developments should be limited to a level that facilitates the dispersed recreation experience and addresses resource impacts. (pg 3-46)

There are no floodplains or wetlands within the project areas, and none of these areas will be impacted. The project site area includes the Cascade Springs. However, project activities will be managed to ensure there will be no impact to water quality, and the project will be consistent with the Clean Water Act.

There are no threatened, endangered, species within the project sites. Bonneville cutthroat trout do occupy habitat at the Springs. There is potential habitat for Ute ladies'-tresses, slender moonwort and spotted frog. A Biological Evaluation/Biological Assessment was completed (Hartman 2004), and a determination of “no effect” and “no impact” to threatened, endangered, or sensitive species was made. No adverse impacts on birds are anticipated, and this decision is consistent with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

No cultural resources will be affected by the proposed action. The decision is consistent with the National Historic Preservation Act, the American Indian Religious Freedom Act, and the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act.

In accordance with Executive Order 12898, this action will not result in any disproportionate impact to minority or low-income populations.

Implementation of this proposal is consistent with other Federal, State, and local laws for the protection of the environment.

9. IMPLEMENTATION DATE

This decision may be implemented immediately.

10. ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW OR APPEAL OPPORTUNITIES

Pursuant to 36 CFR 215.8 (a) (4), this decision is not subject to a higher level of review or appeal.

11. CONTACT PERSON

For further information about this decision or project, please contact, Pam Gardner, Pleasant Grove Ranger District, at 390 North 100 East, Pleasant Grove, Utah 84062, or by phone at (801) 785-3563.

/s/ Pamela J. Gardner
Pamela J. Gardner
District Ranger
Pleasant Grove Ranger District

July 7, 2004
Date