

DECISION MEMO

Grove Creek Trailhead

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

1. INTRODUCTION

The Grove Creek Trailhead is a popular day-use site situated along the Wasatch Front, in Utah County, Utah. It is located near the mouth of Grove Creek Canyon, within NW1/4 NW1/4, Section 22, T 5 S., R 2, E., S.L.B.M., at the eastern edge of Grove Creek Drive in Pleasant Grove City. Due to the popularity and high public use that occurs there, the Forest Service believes that the existing trailhead should be reconstructed to provide toilet facilities and improved parking to address public health and safety concerns. The completed multi-use trailhead will provide access to the Bonneville Shoreline, Grove Creek, and Great Western Trails.

2. PROPOSED ACTION

The Uinta National Forest proposed to modify the existing Grove Creek Trailhead to improve the quality of recreation user resources in the Grove Creek environs. As currently designed, the new trailhead development will comprise the following:

- Modification of the existing trailhead to provide an 18,400 ft² parking lot, of which about 17,850 ft² would be covered with a three-inch bituminous surface. Associated with this activity would be placement of larger barrier rocks around the perimeter to limit off highway vehicle access.
- Installation of information and traffic signs.
- Placement of a pre-cast, single-vault toilet which is Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant. Also, construction of three picnic sites, each consisting of cement pad and picnic table.
- Development of a Heritage Garden to showcase the use of native plants requiring limited maintenance and water. The Garden will provide ideas as to how the public may use native plants in their landscaping projects.
- Realignment of the entrance to the Bonneville Shoreline and Pleasant Grove City Nature Park

3. PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose of the proposed action is to reconstruct the existing facility that currently consists of a graded, gravel-aggregate covered surfaced parking area surrounded by a few barrier rocks. The new facility will provide improved parking for both passenger vehicles and vehicles with horse trailers, provide ADA-compliant toilet facilities to

address public health concerns, and address access issues for the Bonneville Shoreline Grove Creek and Great Western Trails. Additionally, the new facility will complement the adjacent Pleasant Grove City Nature Park.

4. SCOPING AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The Pleasant Grove Ranger District initiated scoping for this proposal by issuing a scoping letter in January 2004 which was sent to about 25 known interested parties. The proposed project was also listed in the Uinta National Forest's "Schedule of Proposed Actions", Winter, Spring, Summer, Fall 2003, Winter, Spring, Summer 2004 editions. In response to these solicitations, the Forest received comments from Utah Environmental Congress. The project was also internally scoped. Based upon the public comments and interdisciplinary team review, only one issue was identified:

- A. A concern regarding the carrying capacity of the area served by the trails, and impacts to winter/summer range was identified. It was suggested that the Forest Service should consider the larger impact the considerable level of human development and activity along the Wasatch Front is having upon wildlife, plants, soil, waters and other resources of the area.

The trailhead and surrounding area is currently heavily used. The Pleasant Grove City Nature Park is adjacent to the property on which the trailhead sits. Additionally, there are numerous user-created OHV trails that access the Park, National Forest System land, and intersect the trailhead. The intent of this project is to control unauthorized OHV trail development and use (especially "trails" in the area known as the "Chicken Ranch"), improve facilities to minimize impacts to soil and water resources, thereby improving the condition of the surrounding vegetation, soil and wildlife habitat. Limiting users to designated roads/trails will facilitate reestablishment of vegetation, reducing soil erosion, thereby limiting overland transport of sediment into the adjacent diversion structures and dams. The actual trailhead facility will not be expanded, and the design and layout of the facilities will limit the number of vehicles/people who may use the trailhead at any one time (20 vehicles total), and accommodate the use that is already occurring.

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 31.2, No. 5):

“Repair and maintenance of recreation sites and facilities.”

The proposed action fits this category as it does not include construction of a new trailhead nor does it involve areas outside of the existing footprint of the existing trailhead.

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 trailhead has been surveyed and no threatened or endangered species are present. The project area does not contain any critical habitat for threatened and endangered species. The Forest Service has determined that this project will not adversely affect any federally protected species or critical habitat (Hartman, 2003).
- b. Floodplains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds – The trailhead reconstruction will have no impact on municipal watersheds. The project area does not reside in, and the project will 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.
- d. Inventoried roadless areas (IRAs) – The project area is located outside the Rock Canyon/Buckley Mountain IRA. As described in Section 7 of this Decision Memo, trailhead reconstruction will have no impact on the classification, management and characteristics of this IRA.
- 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 congressionally designated areas.

6. DECISION

I have decided to approve the reconstruction of the Grove Creek Trailhead facilities.

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 31.2; 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 Grove Creek Trailhead lies within the American Fork 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:

FW-Goal-4 “Heritage resources are identified, preserved, and enhanced.” (LRMP, p.2-1)

FW-Goal-6 - “Diverse and suitable recreational opportunities are provided responsive to public demand while maintaining ecosystem health and contributing to social and economic sustainability. . . .” (LRMP, p.2-1)

Sub-goal-2-6 –“Ecosystems on the Forest provide and maintain viable and well-distributed populations of flora and fauna.” (LRMP, p.2-5)

Sub-goal-2-23 - “Areas identified as being of special concern for habitat such as big game winter range, . . . are maintained and, where potential exists, improved or expanded. Disturbances in these areas are limited during critical periods for wildlife.” (LRMP, p.2-9)

Sub-goal-2-42 – “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.” (LRMP, p.2-11)

Sub-goal-6-1 – “An increasing number of users are accommodated within the capability of the resource by maintaining and improving existing developed recreation sites and emphasizing management of dispersed recreation.” (LRMP, p.2-18)

Sub-goal- 6-3 - “Dispersed recreation opportunities are offered in areas close to urban centers, with an emphasis on a full range of trail opportunities.” (LRMP, p.2-18)

Sub-goal – 8-7 – “Critical infrastructure, such as . . . recreation sites, are protected.” (LRMP, p.2-22)

There are no floodplains or wetlands within the project area, and none of these areas will be impacted. The project site is located away from streams and springs and will not impact water quality. The project is consistent with the Clean Water Act.

There are no threatened, endangered, sensitive species within the project site. A Biological Evaluation/Biological Assessment was completed (Hartman 2003), 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 Pamela Gardner, District Ranger, 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

7/15/04
Date