

Decision Memo for Deadman's Corner Guardrail and Restoration Project

**Davis County, Utah
Wasatch-Cache National Forest
Salt Lake Ranger District**

Background

This Decision Memo describes a proposed project to remove wrecked and abandoned vehicles from a site just east of Bountiful, Utah. It also outlines my decision regarding the project, including the mitigation measures that will be used to avoid and minimize adverse environmental effects.

During the past several decades, over thirty cars and trucks and numerous household appliances and other debris has been dumped off a steep embankment on the Ward Canyon Road, in a location locally known as Deadman's Corner. The site where the debris rests generally overlies an intermittent tributary to Stone Creek. Unfortunately, fluids and pollutants from some of the vehicles and debris are leaking into the stream. Many of the vehicles are buried in sediment. In addition, salvagers have pioneered a 0.3-mile long, user-created road in canyon bottom to reach the vehicles. This route has caused extensive erosion and down cutting of the streambed over the years. Newer vehicles found at the site indicate the dumping is an ongoing problem.

In order to address the environmental problems at the site, we have proposed installing guard rail this fall along the Ward Canyon Road to prevent future accidents and dumping. The vehicles and debris will then be removed and the area rehabilitated in order to restore the health of the riparian corridor, improve wildlife habitat, and prevent additional pollutants from entering the watershed. Barriers will be installed to discourage future use of the illegal road. Rehabilitating the site will help prevent future erosion and flooding problems.

Decision and Rationale

I have reviewed the resource specialists' reports and decided to approve the proposal to remove the vehicles and debris in the Deadman's Corner area using a zero swing excavator and/or SWECO trail tractor and ATV and trailer. This will involve driving the equipment up the stream bed utilizing the existing user-created route and hauling the vehicles and debris out to Ward Canyon Road for removal from the National Forest. A heavy lift helicopter will assist in removing some of the vehicles where possible. Vehicles that are buried in sediment or tangled up in trees will be freed using the excavator and chainsaws before they are removed.

This extraction method will cause minimal additional disturbance to the area and will help restore the riparian corridor, improve wildlife habitat, and reduce watershed pollution. Once the project is complete, the access route will be permanently closed and rehabilitated using the excavator and hand tools. All disturbed areas will be vegetated using approved native seed mix.

Mitigation Measures

Implementation of the following mitigation measures are a part of my decision:

- A zero swing excavator and/or narrow trail tractor will be used to reduce damage to the stream banks.
- Hazardous material cleanup and containment supplies will be available on site in case of accidental leaks from equipment or vehicles.
- Where possible, work will be done by hand (rehabilitation of stream banks, removing small debris, etc.)
- Helicopter operations will be used when and where possible to reduce the number of trips through the stream.
- Trees or vegetation will only be cut when absolutely necessary to free tangled vehicles and allow access for equipment.
- This project will be scheduled for the fall when the stream flow is very low (or possibly dry) and leaves have fallen off the trees (to reduce cutting of vegetation for helicopter visibility).
- Sediment barriers will be placed in the stream at the lowest elevation point of the work site to prevent sedimentation below the work site.
- Signs and road guards will inform the public about the project and roads will be closed during helicopter operations.
- All debris and recovered vehicles will be immediately removed from the forest and disposed of properly.

Vegetation and Weed Management:

- Any straw or seed mix used will be certified weed-free.
- Disturbance to vegetation will be minimized wherever feasible.
- Disturbed soils will be revegetated with an approved native seed mix.
- Equipment will be cleaned before entering the forest and washed immediately after the project is complete to prevent the spread of invasive weeds.

Scoping and Public Involvement

On June 21, 2007, the Wasatch-Cache National Forest (WCNF) circulated a scoping notice summarizing this proposal and soliciting input on associated environmental issues and concerns during a 30-day scoping period. It was sent directly to organizations, Native American tribes, and individuals. It was available on the WCNF website at:

www.fs.fed.us/r4/wcnf/projects/proposed

Additionally, it was available for review at the Salt Lake District Office. As a result of scoping, one comment letter was received which simply requested that the organization be kept informed of this and other Forest Service projects. Documentation of public scoping is in the project file and available for review through the Salt Lake Ranger District.

Reason for Categorically Excluding the Proposed Action

Forest Service biologists and other resource specialists have visited the site, evaluated the proposal, and concluded that the environmental effects will be minor. Upon reviewing the analysis, I determined all practicable means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts have been incorporated into this decision. There were no significant issues raised during scoping and there were no adverse affects identified on resource values listed below under the 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.** Forest Wildlife Biologists and Botanists visited the site, evaluated the proposal, and determined the project would have no effect/impact on threatened, endangered or sensitive species or their habitat. This project will improve wildlife habitat.
- B. Flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds.** This project is generally located within a flood plain and along wetlands. However, mitigation measures will be used to control erosion and prevent sediment from traveling downstream below the worksite. A stream alteration permit has been obtained for this project. The project will help improve the overall health of the watershed, flood plain, and wetlands by reducing stream pollutants and restoring the riparian corridor.
- C. Congressionally designated areas, such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or national recreation areas.** The project area is not located within a Congressionally designated area.
- D. Inventoried roadless areas.** The project area is not located within an inventoried roadless area.
- E. Research Natural Areas.** No Research Natural Areas would be affected by this proposal.
- F. American Indians and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites.** The Forest Heritage Program Manager was consulted and concluded there would be no effect on religious or cultural sites.
- G. Archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas.** The Forest Archeologist visited the site and reviewed the proposal. They concluded this project would not affect archeological sites, or historic properties or areas.

Based upon the findings described herein, I have determined these actions are consistent with the types of actions described under Category 6 in Section 31.2 of Forest Service Handbook 1909.15 – Environmental Policy and Procedures Handbook [Timber stand and/or wildlife habitat improvement activities which do not include the use of herbicides or do not require

more than one mile of low standard road construction (Service level D, FSH 7709.56)].

As such, this decision has been categorically excluded from documentation in an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement. Based on experience with management activities similar to this, and upon the resource specialists' report completed for this project, the effects of implementing this action will be of limited context and intensity.

Findings Required By Other Laws

I have reviewed the Wasatch-Cache National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan). All work conducted on this project will take place in an area managed under the Forest Plan Management Prescription 4.4, which provides a dispersed motorized emphasis on management of this area (*The Forest Plan (2003)* p. 4–151). The actions in this project are consistent with the types of activities permitted under the 4.4 Management Prescription and comply fully with the goals of the Forest Plan, the Management Area Direction, and the Forest-Wide Standards and Guidelines.

Implementation Date

This decision pursuant to 36 CFR 215.12(f) is not subject to appeal. These permitted actions are not one of the 10 activities subject to appeal under the 215 rules as clarified on October 19, 2005 by the Federal District Court for the Eastern District of California in Earth Island Institute v. Ruthenbeck. This decision may be implemented immediately.

Administrative Review or Appeal Opportunities

This decision pursuant to 36 CFR 215.12(f) is not subject to appeal. The proposal is not one of the activities subject to appeal under the 215 rules as clarified on October 19, 2005 by the Federal District Court for the Eastern District of California in Earth Island Institute v. Ruthenbeck.

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/s/ Loren M. Kroenke
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District Ranger

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DATE