

Chapter 2 –Description of Alternatives

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides information about alternatives that were considered but eliminated from detailed study in this EA, details those alternatives which are carried forward into Chapter 3 for in-depth review, and summarizes the effects of implementing each of the alternatives.

2.2 Alternatives Considered and Eliminated from Detailed Study

During the public input process a number of alternatives were suggested which are not examined in detail. These potential alternatives and the rationale for setting them aside from detailed review are included below.

1. Issue special use permits for continued recreation residence use, but do not require compliance with State, County, or City laws, regulations, or ordinances.

Through various Federal laws, States and Counties have the authority and jurisdiction, to regulate and enforce ordinances pertaining to drinking water and wastewater disposal systems on National Forest System lands. In addition, compliance is required by Forest Service regulations and is a part of each summer homeowner's permit. Specifically, clause IV.A of the Forest Service recreation residence permit states, "The holder, in exercising the privileges granted by this permit, shall comply with all present and future regulations of the Secretary of Agriculture and all present and future federal, state, county, and municipal laws, ordinances, or regulations which are applicable to the area or operations covered by this permit."

2. Issue special use permits for continued recreation residence use, but do not require compliance with maintenance and construction standards listed in the permit, FSH 2709.11 and the Administrative Guide.

These requirements were developed to help assure that summer home use would be in compliance with Forest Plan standards and guidelines and other applicable Forest Service policies, laws, and regulations. As noted above consistency with Federal regulations is not discretionary and homeowner's use must be in full compliance with their current permit before a new special use permit can be issued (FSH 2709.11, sec. 41.23(a)3).

3. Issue special use permits for continued recreation residence use for terms less than 20 years.

This alternative would not be consistent with agency policy (FSM 2347.1; FSM 2721.23e and FSH 2709.11, Sec. 41.23), which directs that summer home permits be issued with 20-year terms.

2.3 Description of Alternatives Analyzed in Detail

2.3.1 No Action

Under this alternative the current Term Special Use Permits will expire on December 31, 2008 and the Forest Service will not issue replacement 20-year permits for any of the recreation residences. Instead, those homeowners who desire them would be issued 10-year permits at the end of which time all improvements would have to be removed from NFS lands at the expense of the permit holders (FSM 2721.13c). Restoration of some sites may need to be completed at government expense and permit holders billed for restoration costs.

Improvements that would be removed include structures, roads, utility lines, and buried tanks and containment systems. Permit holders would also pump and fill septic tanks and toilets with earth, and reshape the landscape to fill in structure foundations. The permit holder, with Forest Service guidance, would loosen and break up compacted soils in heavily used areas such as driveways and re-vegetate with native vegetation following residence removals.

Under the No Action Alternative and after the site restoration described above occurs, the land where the Firs, Elbow Fork, and Porter Fork tracts are located would be managed for dispersed, non-motorized recreation, including hiking, cross-country skiing, enjoying nature, and dog walking. The Porter Fork Road would be converted to a four foot wide trail (part of the Porter Fork system trail) and maintained as such. Asphalt would be removed from the road and replaced with a trail that would consist of native soil. Some or all road culverts may be removed and replaced with small foot bridges. The Porter Fork spur road that goes to cabins 1A to 4A would also be converted to a four foot wide trail (part of the Porter Fork-Bowman Fork link system trail). Other roads and spurs in the three tracts would not be needed for trails and would be allowed to revert back to native vegetation.

2.3.2 Proposed Action

Implementation of the Proposed Action would include authorizing continued recreation residence use of NFS lands on 70 lots at the Firs, Elbow Fork, Porter Fork tracts for 20-year terms, beginning in 2009. Under the Proposed Action, recreation residences would continue to be managed according to terms and conditions of the new special use permit, the Forest Plan, an Operations and Maintenance Plan developed for each lot, and the Wasatch-Cache Recreation Residence Administrative Guide.

Section 1.2.2 describes certain existing community improvements that would be authorized as part of the Proposed Action. This includes the following developments that would be authorized to the respective tract association:

Firs Tract

- .5 miles of tract road that includes a main road and three spur roads, two stream crossings with culverts and two gates, and associated signs.
- Water system and access foot-trail.
- Several short trail segments, bench, and the group meeting area/sports court.

Porter Fork Tract

- 1.8 miles of tract roads that include the main road and two spur roads, a bridge spanning Mill Creek, a gate, and ten stream crossings of Bowman Fork and Porter Fork with culverts.
- Community water system installed in the fall of 2006.

The analysis in this EA for the Proposed Action assumes that all 70 recreation residence permit holders will bring their use into compliance with the terms and conditions of their current permit by December 31, 2008, and that their use will continue until at least December 31, 2029. However, cases may arise where a particular homeowner does not to comply with these requirements. In those instances, the permit holder will be formally placed in *non-compliance* status. If they have not remedied the deficiencies by the expiration of the current permit, they may be issued a one-year permit in order to bring their use into compliance. Those permit holders who have not corrected deficiencies at end of one year will be required to remove all structures from the land and re-vegetate and restore the lot to natural conditions. Permit compliance includes the requirement to conform with applicable regulations and ordinances of State, County, and local government.

2.4 Alternative Summary and Impact Comparison

The section provides an overview of the varying impacts of the two alternatives. Chapter 3 contains a complete analysis of the alternatives with regard to the significant issues.

2.4.1 No Action

Fish and Wildlife

Since the area would continue to experience relatively heavy recreation use, there would be little noticeable effect compared to Proposed Action for wildlife. Fish and other aquatic life would benefit as structures and various developments in streamside areas are removed.

Soil and Water

As areas disturbed by recreation use are rehabilitated, areas of bare and compacted soil would be re-vegetated. In addition, roads and other disturbed areas which currently contribute sediment to streams would be reduced and water quality would improve.

Though relatively small in overall terms, streamflow would increase somewhat without homeowner diversion and use.

Vegetation

Over time, more natural vegetation would dominate lands currently occupied by summer homes and associated activities. The potential for introduction of invasive and non-native plant species would be reduced, though not eliminated since public recreation would still occur and seed sources are nearby.

Recreation, Wilderness, Scenery, and Historic Resources

The opportunity for current permittees' family-oriented recreation at 70 summer homes would be foregone. In some cases, these homes have been in the same family for several generations and were the place where important family memories were created. Their removal would be seen as a great loss by some permittees. General public recreation would occur much as it does today. The removal of recreation residences in Porter Fork would be most notable, as hikers and cross-country skiers would utilize a more natural appearing area. Under this alternative, a community water system would be removed in the Porter Fork tract. Since this would involve elimination of one spring diversion and about 600 feet of water line from Pole Canyon in the Mount Olympus Wilderness, there would be a benefit to the wilderness resource. If the No Action Alternative were implemented, it is assumed that a total of 30 lots (14 in Porter Fork & 16 in Firs) that include cabins and/or other structures that are eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, would be removed. Prior to dismantling, consultation with State Historic Preservation Officer would be conducted and important information about the structures recorded.

2.4.1 Proposed Action

Fish and Wildlife

As homeowners remove in-stream structures and refrain from cutting riparian area vegetation to comply with their current permit, conditions for fish and aquatic life would improve, though not to same degree as under the No Action Alternative. Impacts to wildlife from recreation residence use would continue to occur, but it would be mostly overshadowed by other recreation developments and intense public recreation in the canyon.

Soil and Water

Recreation residence use would continue to create some small areas of bare or compacted soils that are prone to erosion and sedimentation.

Vegetation

Recreation residence use and altered vegetation would continue to occur on portions of the 24.5 acres occupied by the three tracts. Outside of riparian areas, understory vegetation would sometimes be cut to reduce the wildfire hazard and recreation use

around the homes would trample natural vegetation. As homeowners bring their use into compliance with their current permits, several lawns would revert to more natural conditions and the introduction of non-native plantings would cease. However, homeowner use would still provide an unintended transport vector for noxious weeds to enter the area.

Recreation, Wilderness, Scenery, and Historic Resources

Family recreation for the current permittees would continue as it has in the past at the 70 homes, providing an important connection for some to past generations. Public recreation in these areas would occur much as it does today, or under the No Action Alternative. The safety of pedestrians using the Porter Fork Road in the summer would continue to be a concern, given its narrow configuration and limited sight distances. The presence of the summer homes, their associated structures, and the powerlines and roads serving the homes would continue to be a visual impact for visitors. Homes currently eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places would continue to be managed to preserve their historic character. As time passes, other structures within the tracts would also become eligible and managed accordingly.

Figure 1

INSERT THE PDF FILE OF VICINITY MAP

Figure 2

Insert pdf file of Analysis area Map

