

# Trails Smart-Sizing Environmental Assessment

## Proposed Action

February 2015

The U.S. Forest Service Sulphur Ranger District (USFS) is proposing to limit bicycle use to designated system trails and roads on the Sulphur Ranger District and improve the trail system in the in the Winter Park and Fraser area in an environmentally and socially responsible manner. The project would connect existing trail networks in the Winter Park and Fraser areas by constructing new trails and rerouting existing trails creating a loop system with varying difficulty levels close to communities for mountain biking, hiking, and other trail users.

The proposed action includes:

- new trail construction;
- trail reroutes;
- trail width reductions;
- trail to administrative road conversion;
- trail bridge construction;
- trail head enhancement; and

closing and decommissioning system and non-system (social or user created) trails.

### **Designated Bicycle Routes**

The proposal would limit bicycle use to designated system roads and trails as depicted on the map in Appendix A of this document. A final map showing roads and trails (routes) open to bicycle use would be printed and made available to the public. This map would be subject to change to incorporate any route decisions authorized in this proposal or future proposals. A Forest Order prohibiting the possession or use of a bicycle off of National Forest System roads and trails depicted on the map would be produced. The prohibition restricting bicycle use to designated system roads and trails would include the entire Sulphur Ranger District. The primary project area encompasses approximately 435,000 acres, the entire Sulphur Ranger District. All non-system (social or user created) trail, both currently present and that which is built in the future, could be obliterated.

### **Trail Construction**

Up to 18 miles of new trail would also be constructed as part of this project (Appendix B Map). A secondary project area of 23,000 acres is depicted on the Appendix B map and encompasses the area where the new trail construction and other trail actions such as trail reroutes and trail narrowing would occur. The majority of new trail construction would be designed primarily for mountain biking. Other uses such as hiking, equestrian use and other non-motorized summer use trail activities would be allowed. Approximately 1.68 miles of trail is proposed to be rerouted (new construction); 5.15 miles of trail is proposed to be converted from trail that is road width to narrower, singletrack (24-36in.) width trail; and 1.1 miles of road will be converted to 50in. wide ATV trail. A portion (.29 miles) of the D4 trail (N74) would become an administrative use road that would be gated at either end and not open to the public. Forest Service personnel and authorized special use permit holders may still use this portion of the route. A portion (.38 miles) of the D4 trail (N74) that is currently closed to motorized uses would allow motorbike use. A map of proposed actions is located in Appendix B of this document and a table of proposed actions is located in Appendix C of this document. A summary of trail and road mileage is included as Appendix D of this document.

### **Trail Design**

Trails would be two way and may include purpose built trail features. If foot travel on these trails was impeded by a built trail feature then a (approximately 24 in. wide) path allowing foot travel around the built trail feature would be constructed. The trails would be of varying difficulty levels as outlined by the International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA) publication *Trail Solutions: IMBA's Guide to Building Sweet Singletrack* (pg. 75). Chainsaw trail (N81) would have parallel side trail options off of the existing trail that offers mountain bikers additional riding options with increased difficulty. A map showing the proposed new trail locations by difficulty level is included as Appendix E of this document. A summary of trail design guidelines is included as Appendix F of this document.

### **Winter Use**

Winter use of trails would be managed as indicated in the map included in Appendix G of this document. The majority of the new trails, although not prohibiting snowmobile use, would not be managed or maintained for snowmobile use. This means that they wouldn't be designed and constructed in a way that encourages snowmobile use (i.e. wide corners). No new trails are proposed to be groomed as part of this project. The section of D4 (N74) that is proposed to be converted to an administrative route would not be groomed during the winter season. The remainder of D4 (N74) as it would exist in the proposed action would not be groomed. Special use permits authorizing use and grooming of D4 (N74) would be amended as part of the proposed action to reflect this. A map showing existing groomed routes and the proposed changes is included as Appendix G of this document.

### **Stream Crossings**

Trail bridges or other appropriate crossing structures would be built across all streams as shown on the proposed action map (Appendix B). The purpose of these structures is to minimize impacts to streams from trails and trail use.

### **Trail Head Enhancements**

Trail head enhancement would apply to the following existing trailheads; Twin Bridges, Lower Creekside, St. Louis Creek, Deadhorse, and Leland Creek trailheads. Trail head enhancement could include things like surface hardening with rock, delineating parking areas with fencing or boulder placement, and improved signage.

### **Trail Decommissioning**

The proposed action reroutes portions of Twin Bridges (N90), WTB (M66), Lower Cherokee (N85), Upper Cherokee (N92) trails, and D4 (N74). Segments of these trails that are no longer needed as a result of the reroutes will be decommissioned and obliterated. This project would also decommission and obliterate the entire (.78 miles) East Elk Creek trail (N65) and a significant portion of D4 (N74). In addition all non-system (social or user –created) trail within the entire Sulphur Ranger District would be decommissioned and obliterated. Within the secondary project area the Forest Service is aware of approximately 25 miles of non-system trail. This non-system trail will be decommissioned and obliterated as well as any non-system trail identified or created in the future within the entire Sulphur Ranger District. As trails in an area (subset of the secondary project area) are constructed, the non-system trails in that same area would be decommissioned and obliterated.