



News Release

Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests &
Thunder Basin National Grassland
<http://fs.usda.gov/mbr>

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Second Public Comment Period for Pole Mountain Travel Management Project to Begin; Environmental Analysis and Alternatives Announced

(LARAMIE, Wyo.) Sept. 23, 2016 – The Laramie Ranger District (LRD) is seeking public input on the Environmental Assessment (EA) and alternatives for the Pole Mountain Travel Management Project.

The EA and alternatives were released this week and a 30-day comment period will commence on Tues., Sept. 27, when the official public notice is published.

All project documents for the Environmental Assessment, alternative actions, and their appendices (maps and tables) are located on the Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests & Thunder Basin National Grassland web site at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=46718>.

A team of specialists with the Medicine Bow National Forest analyzed four project alternatives in the Environmental Assessment: No Action, Modified Proposed, Modified Proposed without OHV Loop, and Wildlife.

Ultimately, the Environmental Assessment did not identify any significant environmental effects from the action alternatives.

Staff from LRD will host two open houses during the first week of October to distribute information on the EA and alternative actions for the Travel Management project.

It is hoped that specific, substantive public comments and public open houses will allow interested groups and individuals to work collaboratively toward improving the final decision by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) on the project.

Comments will be accepted at the open houses, maps will be available for viewing, and information on the project will be available. USFS personnel will be on hand to answer questions. Dates and locations are as follows:

Laramie

- Tuesday, Oct. 4, from 6-8 p.m., at the Lincoln Community Center, 365 W Grand Ave.

Cheyenne

- Wednesday, Oct. 5, from 6-8 p.m., at the Laramie County Community College (LCCC) in the Health Science Building Rm 111/113, 1400 E College Dr.

Public comments should specifically address the project alternatives, based on the Environmental Assessment. The EA analyzes the environmental impacts of the alternatives, within the framework of the purpose and need for the project.

“Development of the alternative actions for this project has been a collaborative effort over the last year between local, state, and federal groups,” said Laramie District Ranger Frank Romero. “Along with those groups and the public comments we’ve received, we came up with some well-thought-out options based on the proposed action put out last November.

“After this comment period and any changes we need to make, I hope to issue a decision on the project towards the end of this year or beginning of next year.”

In its initial proposed action last year, the Laramie Ranger District drafted a plan to leave the majority of roads on Pole Mountain in their current, open status. In order to address access and resource concerns, other management proposals included shortening roads, closing roads, and decommissioning roads. Additionally, the USFS proposed to add select unauthorized routes to the system, convert some roads to Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) trails, build new OHV trails, and use seasonal closures and designated dispersed camping as management tools.

The recently-released alternative actions contain variations of the initial proposed action. To develop the alternatives, the LRD combined public and staff input with a thorough on-the-ground assessment. Public contributions came from local, state, and federal groups, multiple public meetings, and public comments received in a variety of ways.

The Forest Service has provided information on this project directly to interested individuals and local agencies, as well as to Wyoming State agencies and departments, tribes and other federal agencies.

The proposed actions within this Environmental Assessment are responsive to the goals, objectives, and strategies outlined in the 2003 Medicine Bow National Forest Revised Land and Resource Management Plan. The proposed action alternatives also conform with federal requirements to administer and designate roads, trails, and areas for motor vehicle use according to Federal Regulations.

The overall purpose of the project is to identify a sustainable motorized transportation system that will provide diverse motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities, provide adequate access for the Forest Service to manage natural resources, recreation, and permitted uses on the forest, and minimize user conflicts and impacts to the environment.

The Laramie Ranger District partnered in the summer of 2015 with the University of Wyoming Ruckelshaus Institute of Environment and Natural Resources to help facilitate a public information gathering process prior to the official start of the project. The Ruckelshaus Institute coordinated public meetings, developed a public-information website, and collated public input for the Forest Service.

The analysis area for the project is mainly north of Interstate 80 between Laramie and Cheyenne in the Laramie Range. It includes the road system that provides motorized access to approximately 55,000 acres on the Medicine Bow National Forest. Popular areas include Tie City, Happy Jack, Blair-Wallis, Vedauwoo, and Eagle Rock.

In the Laramie, Cheyenne, and Fort Collins area, the Pole Mountain unit is some of the closest and most accessible National Forest System lands. Pole Mountain sees heavy year-round usage from visitors who want to explore public lands. Popular uses include mountain biking, livestock grazing, hiking, off-highway vehicle travel, horseback riding, communication sites, climbing, camping, military training, and hunting/fishing.

Ranger Romero is available to answer questions at (307) 745-2300, or via email, feromero@fs.fed.us. Interested parties can also stop by the Laramie District Office at 2468 Jackson St., 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., Mon. – Fri.

For more information about this project contact the Laramie Ranger District at (307) 745-2300. You can also visit our website at <http://fs.usda.gov/mbr>, or follow the Medicine Bow National Forest on Twitter, [@FS_MBRTB](https://twitter.com/FS_MBRTB).

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