

RECREATION REPORT
for the
Mt. Ashland LSR Project
Klamath National Forest
Oak Knoll District
December 19, 2006

From the Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, the general guideline for recreation management for this area is to provide a broad range of recreational opportunities that meet changing recreational needs. Specifically for the LSR, dispersed recreation should be emphasized and recreational settings should be managed to generally achieve semi-primitive or roaded natural Recreation Opportunity Spectrum conditions. Existing developed recreation sites and facilities can be maintained.

The project area runs from about 3,200 feet in the Beaver Creek drainage to over 6,000 feet on the Siskiyou Crest. This is a scenic area with many forested road corridors in the lower elevations and open meadows and panoramic views in the crest area. The area is popular with visitors from Medford and Ashland who use the road system for all types of driving experiences.

Dispersed recreation in the summer consists mainly of driving for pleasure (or sightseeing), bird-watching, nature hikes, hiking, biking, OHV riding (mainly in conjunction with hunting), and hunting. The 20 road is a very popular driving route especially for visitors from Mt. Ashland and Medford. The Pacific Crest Trail is a popular hike through the high meadows.

Dispersed recreation in the winter consists of cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, snowshoeing and snow play. The 20 road is a popular ski route, and is actually groomed for about 1 ½ miles. It and the area around it are closed to snowmobiles. Some snowmobiling occurs in the rest of the project area where snow conditions and topography allow. The Mt. Ashland Ski Area is adjacent to the project area and attracts many visitors in the winter. It is also a destination for biking and sightseeing in the summer.

The only developed recreation sites are the small Mt. Ashland Campground and Grouse Gap Shelter. The campground receives only light camping use but is popular for picnicking and as a rest stop. Grouse Gap Shelter receives light picnicking use and occasional special events, i.e. weddings. Both sites are used throughout the winter in connection with cross-country skiing.

Most of the recreational use is concentrated along the crest. However, hunting is dispersed throughout the project area. This runs from August (bow season) through late October. All of the open roads are used by hunters, and the whole area is open to camping, although there are a few favorite sites that are used from year to year.

Off-road vehicle use occurs in some areas where topography allows, and damage to soils and vegetation can occur especially in meadows during wet weather. The Klamath Forest has undertaken an OHV route designation process, which will identify, analyze and establish OHV routes. There are some routes within the project area that have been proposed for inclusion in the OHV system.

The most important recreational facility in the area is the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail (PCNST). This trail runs from Mexico to Canada. Approximately 6 miles of the PCNST run along the north boundary of the project area. Use of the trail is light during the spring and early summer. However, from around mid-July to the end of August the trail hosts a number of "through hikers", those hikers walking the entire trail in one year. Use by through hikers can be as high as 15 per day, with over 200 being recorded in 2002.

Safety and convenience of recreational users of the project area is important. Safety concerns primarily revolve around traffic and project activities. These concerns are highest during hunting season (October), when the amount of road use is the highest and hunters are dispersed in the woods. There is also a specific concern for hikers on the PCNST from project activities adjacent to the trail, of which the heaviest use is mid July to mid August. Measures to ensure the safety and convenience of the public include:

1. Traffic Safety and Control Plans prior to commencing project operations. The Plan will provide for public safety on Forest Service controlled roads and trails open to public travel.
2. Roads and trails open to the public will be kept open or only closed for short durations. Project activities will minimize conflicts with public use on weekends and holidays.
3. Dispersed campsites will be maintained in a usable condition if possible, however they are not protected nor managed as developed sites.
4. Warning signs will be posted on the PCNST during any adjacent project activities. Any damage to the trail will be immediately repaired.

None of the alternatives will result in measurable impacts to recreation activities if the measures above are followed. The operational impacts of the projects such as traffic, noise and dust will be temporary. Changes in stand structure and composition resulting from different treatments may result in changes in recreational use patterns, but the same recreational opportunities will continue which is the very nature of dispersed recreation. There is no reason to expect recreation use to measurably increase or decrease because of the proposed project.

Scenery impacts were analyzed in a separate document (see the Mt. Ashland LSR Project Scenery Evaluation).

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