



File Code: 1950-1

Date: August 8, 2008

Dear Interested Party:

The Allegheny National Forest (ANF) is proposing to relocate a portion of the Allegheny Snowmobile Loop #1 along FR 145 / FR216 near Salmon Creek.

Background

The proposed re-route would address safety issues with regards to the hill climb on the existing trail.

The current hill climb maintains an uphill sustained rate of 16-18 percent slope; however, a sharp turn brings the trail into an almost 30 percent slope. This makes the trail very difficult to travel, especially during icy conditions. In addition, riders going uphill, as well as downhill, would not know another rider was there until the last minute. It is not uncommon for portions of this trail to ice up, which makes the grooming of the trail very risky for the operator and the groomer.

Essentially, the groomer can only groom this section of trail by going downhill, as there is the potential for the groomer to slide uncontrollably backwards down the trail and off the trail at the sharp curve if the trail is icy.

The proposed re-route maintains an 8-12 percent climbing rate, and creates a climbing turn where both the rider coming downhill and the rider going uphill are visible.

Purpose and Need

The following standards and guidelines in the Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) apply:

- “System trails shall be restricted seasonally or under certain weather conditions as needed for safety, to prevent resource damage, or to meet specific management objectives.” (LRMP p. 60)
- “ATV/OHM trails will be constructed and maintained to limit erosion or impacts to natural resources. Temporary rerouting on a case-by-case basis will be allowed to facilitate other resource activities.” (LRMP p. 61)
- “Only designated National Forest system trail should be groomed through the Forest Service Contract.” (LRMP p. 61)

Proposed Action

The proposal includes decommissioning 436 feet of existing trail and replacing it with approximately 973 feet of re-routed trail. The re-route would be located south of the existing trail (see attached map).

Type of Analysis

This project falls within category of exclusion 31.2(1). This category allows the, “Construction and reconstruction of trails.” This category does not fall under any of the Earth Island Institute v. Ruthenbeck categorically excluded activity and is not subject to appeal. The analysis will



consider whether extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action warrant further consideration in an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement. Resource conditions that will be considered include: federally listed threatened or endangered species or Forest Service sensitive species; floodplains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds; Congressionally designated areas such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or National Recreation Areas; inventoried roadless areas; Research Natural Areas; or American Indian and Alaska Native religious/cultural sites, archaeological sites, or historical properties/areas (Forest Service Handbook 1909.15, Chapter 30, Section 30.3, Paragraph 2). The mere presence of one or more of these conditions does not preclude use of the category. Rather, it is the degree of the potential effect that determines whether extraordinary circumstances exist.

How to Comment

Comments should be submitted, or postmarked if mailed, by August 25, 2008.

Written comments must be submitted to: Jodie L. Vanselow, Deputy District Ranger, Marienville Ranger District, Allegheny National Forest, HC 2 Box 130, Marienville, PA 16239 or via facsimile (814) 927-2285. The office business hours for those submitting hand-delivered comments are: 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday thru Friday, excluding holidays.

Oral comments must be provided at the Marienville Ranger District office during normal business hours via telephone (814) 927-6628 or in person.

Electronic comments must be submitted in a format, such as an email message, or plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), and Microsoft Word (.doc) file, to comments-eastern-allegheny-marienville@fs.fed.us. Comments must have an identifiable name attached or verification of identity will be required. A scanned signature may serve as verification on electronic comments.

Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record on this proposed decision and will be available for public inspection. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered.

This letter and the attached map are also available on the ANF website at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/forests/allegheny/projects/other/>. If you need additional information, please contact Kevin Treese, District NEPA Coordinator, at (814) 927-5759. Thank you for your interest in the management of the Allegheny National Forest. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

/s/ Jodie L. Vanselow
JODIE L. VANSELOW
Deputy District Ranger

Attachment