

File Code: 1950

Date: SEP 11 2009

Dear Reviewer:

Enclosed is the Decision Notice/Finding of No Significant Impact (DN/FONSI) for the Emmett Ranger District (RD) "E" Area Motorized Wheeled Vehicle Travel Management Project. You are receiving this letter because you provided comments during the 30-day notice and comment period on the proposed action for the project (as documented in the Environmental Assessment [EA]). The DN/FONSI documents my decision to implement Alternative C (Enhanced Motorized Access), as described in the Environmental Assessment (EA), with some modifications.

Key features of modified Alternative C are:

- The lower portion (approximately two miles) of the Wetfoot trail (NFS trail 041006) will be designated "open to motorcycle only." With the designation of this lower portion of the trail, the entire Wetfoot trail will be designated as "open to motorcycle only."
- Approximately three miles of the Onion Valley trail (NFS trail 036006) will be designated "open to motorcycle only." With the designation of this portion of the trail, the entire Onion Valley trail will be designated "open to motorcycle only." However, the southern end of the Onion Valley trail (NFS trail 036006) near the junction with NFS road 555BC is very steep. A reroute of the steep section would be required before this trail is available for motorized use, and there are also several stream crossings that may need to be improved as part of trail maintenance. Consequently, this trail will be closed to motorized use through a Special Order established for resource protection, until specific needed rehabilitation measures that would result in a safe, sustainable trail can be evaluated and undertaken. Following this "E" area decision, I will undertake an in-depth evaluation of trail conditions and determine what environmental analysis is needed before trail rehabilitation can occur. I am grateful for the many offers of help, and look forward to working with individuals, organizations, and State agencies to evaluate this trail and if necessary, identify a more sustainable reroute, given the current and anticipated increased use in the future.
- The lower portion (approximately 2 miles) of the Danskin Creek road (NFS road 613) connecting to the Banks-Lowman Highway will be designated "open to vehicles 50" or less in width."
- A short (about 0.25 mile) section of established route will be designated "open to vehicles 50" or less in width." This designation will connect the Bear Wallow trail (NFS trail 035006) to NFS road 693E, thereby providing an additional off-highway vehicle (OHV) loop opportunity.
- NFS road 605A (3.0 miles) will be designated as open to all motor vehicles 50" or less, to provide a loop opportunity as part of access to a viewpoint. A seasonal closure (October 1 – June 30) will be established on this route to be consistent with seasonal closures on adjoining routes.
- Seasonal closures in the fall (October 1 - June 30) will be applied to some roads and trails (as listed in Appendix A of this decision) in order to reduce big game vulnerability to hunting. Seasonal closures (October 1 – June 30) will not be established on the NFS 374 road system, NFS roads 678H and 678H1, the entire length of NFS road 649, and a portion of NFS road 613 from the Banks-Lowman Highway (Forest highway 24) to the junction with NFS road 669J.



- Approximately 6 miles of NFS roads that currently are open provide limited access, and were identified as an impact to other resources will be decommissioned. In addition, an additional 3 miles of road not currently open or available to motorized use will be decommissioned.
- About 84 miles of existing NFS roads that are currently open to all vehicles but represent dead-end routes will be closed.

Appendix A of the DN/FONSI includes a list of road segments and how they are designated through this decision. Because the project area is so large, a map displaying the results of my decision is available on the Boise National Forest website (<http://fs.usda.gov/boise>) or by contacting the Emmett RD at the address and phone number above.

In making my decision, I carefully considered your comments, along with the environmental analysis, which showed that the difference in environmental effects between Alternative B (the proposed action) and Alternative C. After deliberation, I concluded that Alternative C as modified represents the best balance of motorized and non-motorized use. The "Rationale for the Decision" section of the DN/FONSI summarizes how I considered public comment, with more detail provided in Appendix C of the DN/FONSI.

I know many of you are also interested in the Bull Creek and Silver Creek Summit trails. As described in Chapter 2 of the EA, I have decided to incorporate the existing motorized designation of these trails in this "E" area analysis and decision. However, I determined that any proposed rehabilitation activities, and any proposed changes to the types of motorized use allowed, are outside the scope of this "E" area analysis. Instead, the proposed motorized designation changes and rehabilitation of the trails will be evaluated in a separate environmental analysis. My staff and I are working hard to develop this environmental analysis, and anticipate it to be available for public comment later this fall. Following analysis and public comment, I will decide what types of motorized use will be allowed on these trails, and what specific rehabilitation measures, if any, will be undertaken.

The final "E" area EA is available at the Boise National Forest website (<http://fs.usda.gov/boise>) or by contacting the Emmett RD at the address and phone number above.

Thank you for your interest in our public land and resource management!

Sincerely,



JOHN R. ERICKSON
District Ranger

Enclosure