



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

White Mountain
National Forest

Androscoggin Ranger District

October 2008

Crocker Pond Snowmobile Trail Relocation Project

Decision Memo

Androscoggin Ranger District



For Information Contact:
Dave Neely
Androscoggin Ranger District
White Mountain National Forest
300 Glen Road
Gorham, NH 03561
Phone: 603-466-2713 X 224
Fax: 603-466-2856
www.fs.fed.us/r9/white

**Crocker Pond Snowmobile Trail Relocation Project
Table of Contents
White Mountain National Forest
Androscoggin Ranger District**

Decision 3
 Project Area and Background 3
 Purpose and Need 3
 Proposed Action..... 3
 Description and Reasons for Decision..... 3
Alternatives Considered 4
 Category of the Exclusion..... 4
Relationship to Extraordinary Circumstances 4
 Threatened and Endangered Species or Their Critical Habitat..... 4
 Floodplains, Wetlands, or Municipal Watersheds 4
 Congressionally Designated Areas 5
 Inventoried Roadless Areas 5
 Research Natural Areas..... 5
 American Indians and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites & Archaeological Sites, or
 Historic Properties or Areas..... 5
Public Involvement 5
Findings Required by Other Laws and Regulations 5
 Forest Plan Consistency 5
Implementation Date 5
Contact Person 6
Signature and Date 6

Decision

Project Area and Background

The Crocker Pond Snowmobile Trail (INFRA #97293, Stoneham State Trail #12) traverses a section of NFS lands in the Towns of Albany and Stoneham, Oxford County, Maine. It provides a connection for trails in the Bethel, Maine area to ITS-80/NH Corridor 19 and provides a scenic trail riding opportunity in keeping with the Forest goal to "...maintain its role as part of the statewide and regional snowmobile trail network." (USDA-Forest Service, 2005, p. 1-14).

In the vicinity of Lombard Pond the trail has become flooded to a depth of up to 4 feet by persistent beaver activity, a 150' segment of trail leading to the flooded area has become eroded, and other segments are continually wet due to poor trail location. The flooded section typically does not freeze to a degree that allows safe, quality riding conditions, and there is a regular possibility of snowmobiles and grooming machines becoming stuck. Riders attempting to avoid this situation may attempt "pond-skimming" techniques which jeopardizes rider safety.

Purpose and Need

The purpose of the proposed action is to maintain safe, enjoyable snowmobile riding conditions in keeping with Forest goals and objectives.

The need for the proposed action is to address unsuitable trail location that leads to resource and safety concerns.

The project area is entirely within Management Area 2.1 (MA 2.1; General Forest Area). The proposed project is compatible with the Forest-wide and MA 2.1 goals, standards and objectives identified in the 2005 Land and Resource Management Plan (USDA-Forest Service, 2005, pp. 1-14; 3-3 – 3-8).

Proposed Action

The proposed action is to relocate approximately 1400' of the existing trail to the south onto drier, more stable ground and to stabilize the 150' section to prevent further soil erosion. The relocation work will entail removal of trees, moving of boulders, and construction of trail tread surface with native, on-site material. Minor cut and fill slope construction may take place at certain locations. Intermittent streams will be bridged.

The project would be implemented in the Fall of 2008.

Description and Reasons for Decision

After careful consideration of input from the State of Maine Bureau of Trails, the Town of Stoneham, and the Stoneham Knight Riders Snowmobile Club; the recommendations of an interdisciplinary team of resource specialists, and the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act, I have decided to proceed with the proposed action to relocate this segment of the Crocker Pond Snowmobile Trail.

This decision is based on my review of the project file and past experience with similar activities on the White Mountain National Forest. These activities will reduce deferred maintenance, and improve the quality and safety of the riding experience.

Alternatives Considered

The State of Maine Trails Bureau and District recreation staff originally considered maintenance work within the trail corridor to mitigate the erosion and beaver activity. Primarily because of the poor location of the existing alignment these activities would likely not be successful in addressing the underlying problems. Erosion could still occur because of the grade and location of the eastern approach to the site, wet areas to the west of the site are located in the lowest point and have nowhere to drain, and the beaver will likely remain active unless trapped. The alternative of realigning the trail will best address all issues over the long term, and represents a lesser degree of environmental disturbance in comparison to the alternative.

Reasons for Categorically Excluding the Decision

Decisions may be categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement or environmental assessment when they are within one of the categories identified by the U.S. Department of Agriculture in 7 CFR 1b or one of the categories identified in 36 CFR 220.6(d) and (e), and there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the decision that may be substantially affected by the project.

Category of the Exclusion

The project is within Category 1 of 36 CFR 220.6(e) “Construction and reconstruction of trails”.

Consistent with agency direction regarding the Federal District Court decision in Earth Island Institute v. Ruthenbeck; notice, comment, and appeal are required for actions related to OHV management in the following circumstances:

1. The designation of travel routes for off-highway vehicle (OHV) use which is not conducted through the travel management planning process as part of the forest planning process;
2. The construction of new OHV routes and facilities intended to support OHV use;
3. The upgrading, widening, or modification of OHV routes to increase either the levels or types of use by OHVs (but not projects performed for the maintenance of existing routes)

Because this action relocates an existing, designated OHV route and does not increase the use levels or types of uses allowed, the notice, comment, and appeal requirements are not applicable.

Relationship to Extraordinary Circumstances

Threatened and Endangered Species or Their Critical Habitat

To date, no federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species have been observed or are known to be present. A review of the site was conducted by the District Biologist and these findings are documented in the project file.

Floodplains, Wetlands, or Municipal Watersheds

This project is not within a municipal watershed. Part of the purpose and need for the action is to move the trail and associated use away from wetlands and floodplains on to drier, more stable ground. Therefore, the project effects to floodplains, wetlands, or any municipal water supply are expected to be either beneficial or non-existent.

Congressionally Designated Areas

The project area is not located with a Congressionally designated area, and is more than 2.6 miles from the closest boundary of the Caribou Speckled Mountain Wilderness. Because of the small scale of the project and distance from Wilderness this project's effects on this Wilderness are expected to be non-existent.

Inventoried Roadless Areas

The project area is not within any inventoried roadless area. The closest inventoried roadless area is the Caribou 2 inventoried roadless area, which is located approximately .04 miles from the project area. Given the small scale of the project and in the context of the current, existing use of the Crocker Pond Snowmobile Trail, the effects are expected to be minor or non-existent.

Research Natural Areas

The proposed project area is not located within or adjacent to a Research Natural Area (RNA) or a candidate RNA (CRNA). Therefore, the effects on any RNA or CRNA are expected to be non-existent.

American Indians and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites & Archaeological Sites, or Historic Properties or Areas.

Review of the site was performed by the District heritage paraprofessional. It was determined that the possibility of impacts to cultural resources is low. During implementation, construction crews will be directed to be vigilant for discovery of artifacts. If any discovery is made, work will be halted until further investigation can be made by the Forest Archaeologist.

Public Involvement

Public involvement for the project included verbal and email communication with the State of Maine Trails Bureau, the Stoneham Knight Riders Snowmobile Club, and the Town of Stoneham. No issues or alternatives were identified by any party.

Findings Required by Other Laws and Regulations

My decision will comply with all applicable laws and regulations.

Forest Plan Consistency

This decision is consistent with all applicable management direction contained in the Forest Plan (USDA-Forest Service, 2005). The Forest Plan has been reviewed in consideration of this project. This decision is responsive to guiding direction contained in the Plan, as summarized in purpose and need section of this document.

Appeals

This decision is not subject to administrative appeal under Forest Service Appeal Regulations found in 36 CFR 215.

Implementation Date

The relocation and rehabilitation of the Crocker Pond Snowmobile Trail may be implemented immediately.

Contact Person

Further information about this decision can be obtained from Dave Neely, Assistant Ranger, Androscoggin Ranger District, (300 Glen Road, Gorham, NH 03581) Phone: 603-466-2713 X 224: 603-466-2856 or dneely@fs.fed.us.

Signature and Date

I have concluded that this decision may be categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement or environmental assessment as it is within one of the categories identified in 36 CFR 220.6 (d) and (e), and the effects to extraordinary circumstance resources related to the decision are expected to be minor or non-existent. My conclusion is based on information presented in this document and the entirety of the Planning Record.

/s/ O'Dell Tucker

10/10/2008

O'DELL TUCKER
Deputy District Ranger

DATE

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or familial status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) Should contact USDA's target center at 202-720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-w, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Ave. SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call 202-720-5964 (voice or TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.