United States Department of Agriculture | **Forest Service** | **White Mountain National Forest**
Saco Ranger District

33 Kancamagus Highway
Conway, NH 03818
Comm: (603) 447-5448
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File Code: 1950
Date: February 28, 2006

Dear Interested Citizen,

I am writing to invite you to comment on the Diana's Baths Site Improvements Project. This project includes the installation of a vault toilet and other site improvements.

The enclosed Scoping Report provides additional detail about this project, instructions on how to comment, as well as a map for your reference. This document is also posted on our WMNF web site: <www.fs.fed.us/r9/forests/white_mountain/projects/projects/>.

You have received this letter because you own property in close proximity to the project area or have expressed interest in similar projects. I am interested in receiving your comments about our proposal, including any information about the project area that could help us improve our plans.

Thank you for your interest in the management of the White Mountain National Forest.

Sincerely,

/s/ Terry Miller
TERRY MILLER
District Ranger

Diana's Baths Site Improvements Project
Scoping Report
White Mountain National Forest
Saco Ranger District

Introduction
The Saco Ranger District of the White Mountain National Forest (WMNF) is initiating a public scoping and comment period for site improvements at Diana's Baths located in the towns of Conway and Bartlett, New Hampshire. The proposed project is located within the Town of Conway. The project is described below under Purpose and Need and Proposed Action.

This Report includes the Purpose and Need for the project, the Proposed Action, the Decisions to be Made, and How You Can Submit Comments to the Forest Service. The enclosed map displays the project area and proposed management actions.

Project Area and Background
Diana's Baths is a high use recreation site, located off of West Side Road (please see Figure 1). Currently, a 40 car parking lot services this recreation site. A 1/2 mile accessible portion of the Moat Mountain Trail allows visitors to access Diana's Baths. The Moat Mountain Trail continues and provides access to the Red Ridge and Attitash Trails. A variety of user groups utilize this trailhead including hikers, mountains bikers, hunters, and skiers. The first .5 mile of accessible trail is the most highly used portion of the trail along with the Baths, a very day use recreation area in the summer months.

Following the construction of the existing trailhead, accessible trail, and parking lot in the late 1990s, the Saco Ranger District agreed to monitor the concerns brought forward during the planning process by interested parties. The concerns centered on conflicting views regarding the adequacy of the parking lot size and whether a toilet facility was warranted. Since the year 2000, the Forest Service has conducted site monitoring to assess these concerns.

Diana's Baths is one of the most visited recreation fee sites on the WMNF. Despite a general decline in recreation fee revenues on the WMNF, fee collections at Diana's Baths have increased annually since 2003. It is the second most heavily visited day use site on the Forest. An estimated 1,000 additional visitors purchased a recreation pass at this site in 2004 and in 2005. At least 95% of the fee revenues remain on the Forest to fund recreation site improvements and maintenance, such as those proposed herein.

Purpose and Need
The purpose of the proposed project is to respond to the level of use, length of stay, and health and safety concerns at this high use recreation site. This project also responds to new

requirements for recreation fee sites. The need for the several project components is described below.

Human Waste Management
Part of the ongoing monitoring at Diana's Bath has included a survey of the presence of human waste over the past 7 years during peak use season. Nearly every monitoring report indicates the evidence of human waste near the parking area and the Baths. Visitors during the peak use seasons often swim in the Baths area, which increases the length of stay at the site. The longer the length of stay in a concentrated area, the more important it is to provide a facility to properly dispose of human waste.

The continued presence of human waste is a concern for several reasons. First, the presence of untreated human waste can be a human health hazard. Secondly, human waste can also negatively impact water quality, particularly near Lucy Brook. Lastly, the obvious presence of human waste and toilet paper can negatively impact visitor experience. At other similar, high use recreation sites on the Saco Ranger District, a vault toilet is present to address these health, safety, visitor experience, and water quality issues.

Parking Lot Capacity
Site monitoring has also included tallying the number of vehicles in the parking lot and also those parked along West Side Road. Monitoring by Forest Service personnel has determined that on average during sunny days in the peak use season that the parking lot reaches capacity and 15 to 20 vehicles are parked along West Side Road. This results in safety concerns. By parking on the side of the road, pedestrians inevitably end up sharing the road corridor with traffic. Also, when several vehicles are parked along the road, the site distance for vehicles pulling in and out of traffic is limited.

Recreation Fee Program
On December 8, 2004, the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (REA) was enacted. REA authorized the USDA Forest Service, as well as other federal land management agencies, to retain recreation fee revenues to repair, improve, operate, and maintain recreations sites and areas to quality standards. REA replaces the previous Recreation Fee Demonstration Project that authorized the USDA Forest Service to collect fees at recreation sites. REA also set new requirements for amenities that need to be provided at recreation fee sites. These include a permanent trash receptacle.

Litter is commonly picked up by Forest Service personnel at Diana's Baths. Although the "pack it out, pack it out" education message has been successful at reducing the amount of litter clean up, high use recreation sites often require frequent trash pick up. This holds true at Diana's Baths. In order for Diana's Baths to continue to be managed as a feet site under the Recreation Enhancement Act of 2004, trash receptacles are required to be provided.

Proposed Action
The project, as proposed, includes the following components which are described in more detail below (please see Figure 2):

1. Installation of a vault toilet in close proximity to the parking lot.
2. Reshaping and reduction in size of the parking area center island, providing at most 20 additional parking spaces.

3. Installation of a solar compacting trash receptacle.

Vault Toilet

The proposed action includes the installation of a vault toilet similar to those found at other developed recreation sites across the White Mountain National Forest (please refer to the photo on the left). The structure would have two restroom stalls housed by a building approximately 12 feet wide by 12 feet long. It would be placed near the parking area along the initial portion of the Moat Mountain Trail. Installation would entail removal of trees to allow for construction and sunlight to reach the building, which is crucial in the proper functioning of these type of toilets. An approximate 35 foot by 35 foot area would have to be cleared. Additionally, the access along the trail would be improved to allow for the vaults beneath the building to be pumped on a regular basis.

By providing a toilet facility, the amount and frequency of human waste and toilet paper being found adjacent to the Moat Mountain Trail, parking area, and the Baths is expected to decrease.

Parking Lot

The parking lot is currently designed for 40 cars. An island in the center of the lot prevents use of this area for vehicle parking. This project proposes to reduce the size of this island to allow up to 20 additional parking spaces. These additional parking spaces would eliminate or at least significantly reduce overflow parking along West Side Road on most peak use season days given the level of use observed over the past several years. If use continues to increase, the Saco Ranger District will determine if carrying capacity of the site has been reached and initiate efforts to manage the number of visitors in order to protect the natural resources of the site as well as visitor experience.

No additional area would need to be disturbed beyond the existing confines of the parking lot. The number of vehicles parked along West Side Road is expected to decline, improving safety for visitor and those traveling the road.

Trash Receptacle

The Saco Ranger District proposes to install a trash receptacle near the parking area. This receptacle incorporates green technology with a small solar panel that serves as the power source for the compactor. The receptacle is similar in size to a large trash can, but is able to accommodate significantly more refuse by through compaction. This feature will reduce the amount of maintenance required and will also reduce the risk of overflow that would invite wildlife concerns. By installing a trash receptacle, the intent is to reduce the amount of litter at Diana's Baths and also meet the requirements of REA. The "pack it in, pack it out" message will continue to be an important component of the District's education message during visitor contacts and on information kiosks.

This Saco Ranger District would implement these project components during 2006 and 2007.

Forest Plan Compliance and Management Direction
The proposed project is compatible with the goals for developed recreation identified in the 2005 Land and Resource Management Plan (USDA-Forest Service, 2005):

> "Developed recreation will provide a variety of quality campground, day use, and other roadside recreation opportunities where the natural forest setting is an important part of the visitor's experience, while ensuring the balanced protection of social and natural resources."

Diana's Baths lies in Management Area 2.1 (General Forest Area). This project is compatible with the standards and objectives for developed recreation within MA 2.1 and the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum class of roaded natural.

Findings of Preliminary Analysis
Prior to construction of the existing parking area and accessible trail serving Diana's Baths in the late 1990s, an environmental analysis was completed for the project area. The proposed project lies within the same analysis area. This previous analysis and preliminary reviews and surveys of the project areas by resource specialists indicate that the following resource conditions exist:

1. 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.
2. The project will not result in an adverse effect to any extraordinary circumstance, floodplains, wetlands, or any municipal water supply.
3. The Project Area does not include any Congressionally Designated Areas, Wilderness, Wilderness Study Areas, or National Recreation Areas.
4. The Project Area does not include any inventoried roadless areas.
5. The Project Area is not located in a Research Natural Area.
6. The WMNF Cultural Resources Atlas shows no known cultural sites in the project areas. A site specific survey will be completed and an Archaeological Resource Report will be prepared for review by the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO).

Decisions to be Made
After considering your input, the recommendations of an interdisciplinary team of resource specialists, and the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, I will decide whether to approve the implementation of these projects as proposed.

Once the level of documentation is determined and the analysis is completed, copies of the decision will be mailed to people who submit comments during this 30-day comment period, and to those who request copies.

How to Submit Comments
Comments should be addressed to Saco District Ranger Terry Miller as follows:

- **Written comments** must be postmarked by the Postal Service, e-mailed, FAXed or otherwise submitted by 11:59 pm ET on the 30th calendar day following publication of the legal notice.

- **Mail:** Send to Holly Jewkes, Project Team Leader, Saco Ranger Station, 33 Kancamagus Highway, Conway, NH 03818. Letters can be hand delivered Tuesday through Sunday, 8:00am-4:30pm and Monday, 9:00am-4:30pm.
- **FAX**: Send to Attn: Holly Jewkes @ 603-447-8405.
- **E-mail**: Send to (**comments-eastern-white-mountain-saco@fs.fed.us**), and must include an identifiable name. Comments submitted as electronic documents must be in plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rft) or Word (.doc) format. You should receive an automated electronic acknowledgement as confirmation of receipt of your comments. If you do not receive acknowledgement, it is your responsibility to ensure timely receipt by other means.
- **Oral comments** may be submitted Tuesday through Saturday, 8:00am-4:30pm and Monday, 9:00am-4:30pm, by phone (603-447-5448 x127) or in person; and must be received by close of business on the 30th calendar day following publication of the legal notice.

Comments must be submitted or mailed within thirty days after the publication date of the legal notice in the Manchester Union Leader. Comments should include the following information:

1) Your name, address, and, if possible, your phone number and e-mail address.
2) The title of the project you are commenting on.
3) Your specific concerns and reasons the concern may lead to environmental effects.

The purpose of soliciting your comments during this scoping period is to collect additional information and to identify any unresolved issues regarding the proposal. To make your comments substantive they should be specific to the proposed action. Be sure to provide supporting rationale for your comments, including concerns about environmental effects of the proposed project. Please be aware that your name, address and comments will become part of the public record and may be available for public inspection.