

# DECISION MEMO

## Basin Trail Relocation

USDA Forest Service, Eastern Region, White Mountain National Forest  
Saco Ranger District  
Town of Chatham, New Hampshire

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## 1.0 Decision

### 1.1 Background

The Basin Trail is a 4.5 mile trail straddling Basin Rim in Chatham, NH. Beginning from the southern terminus, the trail is adjacent to Basin Pond and the stream feeding into it for about one mile. Because the trail shares the same elevation as the pond, the trail in this area is often wet causing trail users to widen the trail or create multiple trails in avoidance of this. There is also a need to establish a single, well-placed stream crossing to prevent erosion along the banks created by visitors trying to find a viable crossing. This relocation would successfully mitigate these issues by putting the trail on well-draining topography and directing use to a single stream crossing.

### 1.2 Purpose and Need

The purpose of this project is to relocate a damaged segment of trail on the Basin Trail onto more sustainable and appropriate terrain to prevent resource damage and improve recreation opportunities for trail users. The Basin Trail is regularly subjected to overflows from nearby Basin Pond causing trail users to go off the trail to find drier ground and is also in need of a well-established stream crossing. These conditions have resulted in negative resource impacts along the stream banks and areas adjacent to the current trail.

### **1.3 Description of Decision**

Based on the review of the project file and past experience with similar activities on the White Mountain National Forest, I have decided to relocate the Basin Trail. The relocation will be .3 miles in length and within a quarter mile of the existing trail. It will be constructed on a slope and will be built using bench construction with a slight outslope to facilitate better drainage across the slope. The new trail will lead to an established and viable stream crossing.

This action is categorically excluded from documentation in an Environmental Impact Statement or Environmental Assessment. It is my finding that these projects meet the criteria under Forest Service Handbook 1909.15, Chapter 31.2, Categories of Actions for which a Project or Case File and Decision Memo Are Required. The Basin Trail relocation resides in the following category: 31.2(1) Construction and reconstruction of trails. The categorical exclusion is appropriate in this situation because there are no extraordinary circumstances potentially having effects that may significantly affect the environment.

### **1.4 Alternatives Considered but Eliminated**

Forest Service personnel surveyed alternate relocation routes in the vicinity of the Basin Trail. The approved route was determined to be the best suited in consideration of terrain and sustainability.

## **2.0 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 US Department of Agriculture in 7 CFR part 1b.3 or one of the categories identified by the Chief of the Forest Service in Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 1909.15 sections 31.1b or 31.2, and there are no extraordinary circumstances present.

### **2.1 Category of Exclusion**

The proposed action falls within the categories of actions described in the FSH 1909.15, Amendment 1909.15-2004-3, Section 31.2.

Category 1 of Section 31.2 states: "Construction and Reconstruction of trails." This category requires a project file and Decision Memo.

### **2.2 Relationship to Extraordinary Circumstances**

Permitting of these improvements involves minimal earth disturbance.

#### **Steep slopes or highly erosive soils.**

This project will move recreational activity off of wet trail onto slightly higher ground and drier soils.

#### **Threatened and endangered species or their critical habitat. .**

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 rare plant survey was conducted in this area during the summer of 2004. Rare plants were not found in the project area.

**Flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds.**

This trail relocation will have no negative impacts to flood plains, wetlands, or watersheds. No wetlands permit is required.

**Congressionally designated areas, such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or National Recreation Areas.** The Basin Trail Relocation is not within Wilderness.

**Inventoried roadless areas.**

A short segment of the Basin Trail relocation lies within a roadless area (White Mountain National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan 2005). The existing segment of trail also falls within the roadless area and the relocation will cause no net gain.

**Research Natural Areas.**

There are no research natural areas within the project area (White Mountain National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan 2005).

**Native American religious or cultural site, archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas.**

A cultural resource survey was conducted in the summers of 2004 and 2005. The State Historic Preservation Office concurred with the recommendation that this project will not have an adverse effect on cultural or archaeological sites.

**Summary**

No other extraordinary circumstances related to this project were identified. Based on past experience with similar activities of this type on the Saco Ranger District, I have determined that the environmental effects associated with the proposed action are not likely to exceed those associated with Category 3 actions.

**3.0 Public Involvement**

Scoping included written notification and a public comment period. Nearby private landowners and the Towns of Chatham and Sandwich were notified. Additionally, scoping entailed numerous site visits by District staff that included cultural resource and rare plant surveys.

Eight comments were received during the public comment period, which indicated support for the project as proposed.

**4.0 Findings Required by and/or Related to Other Laws and Regulations**

My decision will comply with all applicable laws and regulations. See Section 2.2 above.

## 5.0 Administrative Review or Appeal

This decision is not subject to a higher level of administrative review or appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 215.8.

## 6.0 Implementation Date

This decision may be implemented immediately.

## 7.0 Contact Person

Further information about this decision can be obtained from Jana Johnson at the Saco Ranger District:

33 Kancamagus Highway

Conway, NH 03818

Voice: 603 447-5448 Ext. 106

TTY/TDD: 603 447-3121

Email: [janajohnson@fs.fed.us](mailto:janajohnson@fs.fed.us)

## 8.0 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 by the US Department of Agriculture in 7 CFR part 1b.3 or one of the categories identified by the Chief of the Forest Service in FSH 1909.15 sections 31.1b or 31.2, and there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the decision that may result in a significant individual or cumulative environmental effect. My conclusion is based on information presented in this document and the entirety of the planning record.

/s/ Terry Miller  
TERRY MILLER  
District Ranger

3/21/06  
Date