



File Code: 1950

Date: August 29, 2003

Dear Interested Party

Structural problems have recently been identified in the Tin Cup Water and Sewer Company's (TCWS) dam at Tin Cup Lake. I plan to authorize TCWS immediate motorized access and use of motorized equipment within the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness to make necessary repairs. I will also identify any requirements they will need to meet to provide reasonable protection for national forest resources. The work must be completed before adverse weather sets in at this remote high elevation site, and therefore will begin as soon as plans can be agreed upon and equipment mobilized. I expect activities to begin between September 10 and September 15.

The urgency for action precludes us from completing the normal analysis and public involvement procedures of the National Environmental Procedures Act (NEPA). Therefore, I will be consulting with the Council on Environmental Quality on alternative arrangements as provided for in the NEPA regulations (40 CFR 1506.11). My intent is to meet the spirit of NEPA to the fullest extent that this emergency situation allows.

Foremost, I want to hear from you. I am particularly interested in specific ideas or information you believe I should consider about this authorization, its potential effects on people and the environment, or reasonable mitigations that you think might help limit those effects. Because of the urgency and short time frames, I must hear from you immediately if I am to consider your comments in this initial authorization. A description of TCWS's proposal, supporting information, how to comment, and where to get more information is attached.

I have established an experienced interdisciplinary team with first hand knowledge of the Tin Cup area resources and experience with similar projects. This team will review the proposal and your comments and provide me with their expert advice on potential environmental effects, reasonable means to minimize them, appropriate monitoring, and any necessary follow-up restoration.

To avoid delays in sharing information, I will use the Bitterroot National Forest's Internet web-site to post pertinent information related to this authorization for your review. It currently includes information on the proposed repairs, copies of several environmental documents which disclose the potential environmental effects of similar work on this and other local wilderness dams, and environmental monitoring results from the 1998 Tin Cup Dam emergency work. We will update this web-site as additional information is available.

I realize this situation is less than ideal, but I believe it necessary given the risks of not taking action prior to next spring's run-off. I thank you now for your consideration, comments, and understanding.

Sincerely,

DAVID T. BULL  
FOREST SUPERVISOR

