



Catherine Creek Loop Trail Bridge

Klickitat County, Washington

Consistency Determination (CD-26-02-S)

Background

CRGNSA staff propose to replace the bridge over Catherine Creek, on the Catherine Creek Loop Trail (Forest Road 1230-021) near the connection with Atwood Road (Forest Road 1230-020). The bridge had been in poor condition, and in early 2026 CRGNSA staff determined it was unsafe for continued use and removed it. The replacement bridge will be a single-log stringer bridge, approximately 40 feet in length. The bridge will be constructed slightly upstream of the location of the bridge that was removed. An approximately 90-foot-long section of new trail will be constructed to connect the new bridge to the existing Catherine Creek Loop Trail.

Decision

I find that the above proposal is consistent with the Management Plan for the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area (CRGNSA) if it is implemented as described in the application materials, the CRGNSA Consistency Determination and Findings of Fact referenced as CD-26-02-S, and provided the following conditions are applied:

1. Metal hardware used to construct or install the bridge shall be nonreflective, or shall be painted or treated to remove any visible reflectivity.
2. The inadvertent discovery procedure described in the Cultural Resources section of this Consistency Determination shall be followed in the event that cultural resources are discovered during construction.
3. Disturbed areas shall be reseeded with a native plant species mix approved by the CRGNSA Botanist.
4. Implementation shall not occur during California mountain kingsnake nesting season, May 1 to August 30.
5. Vegetation, debris, rocks, and crevices to be removed as part of construction shall be surveyed by the CRGNSA Wildlife Biologist or their designee, and cleared of individual California mountain kingsnakes immediately prior to implementation.
6. The CRGNSA Wildlife Biologist or their designee shall be present to ensure that individual California mountain kingsnakes are moved out of the work area during initial grading.
7. Once all refugia is cleared, no one should be needed to monitor work, but equipment operators should be aware and maybe check around and under anything left on-site overnight (including trucks/dozers) to make sure no snakes are present. If any are found either avoid the area until they leave on their own, or have someone move the snake out of the work area.



8. Equipment and materials left on-site overnight should be checked for California mountain kingsnakes prior to starting work each day. If snakes are present, the equipment and materials should be left until the snake leaves on its own, or until the CRGNSA Wildlife Biologist or their designee can remove it.
9. Any salamanders or amphibians seen during implementation shall be relocated downstream at least 100 feet.

Administrative Review (Appeal) Opportunities

A written request for review of the National Scenic Area Consistency Determination, with reasons to support the request, must be received within 20 days of the date shown with the Forest Supervisor signature below. Requests for review should be addressed to: Request for Review, Regional Forester, P.O. Box 3623, Portland, OR 97208. A copy of the request should be mailed to the USFS-CRGNSA Office at 902 Wasco Street, Suite 315, Hood River, Oregon 97031, ATTN Appeals, and/or emailed to appeals-pacificnorthwest-columbia-river-gorge-nsa@usda.gov.

Implementation Date

This project may begin immediately after the date of this decision. Project implementation must comply with the conditions of approval described above. The Consistency Determination expires two years after the date on this determination. If implementation has not commenced before that date, a new consistency review or request for extension shall be required.

NICOLAS GRANUM
Deputy Forest Supervisor
Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area

Date



CRGNSA Consistency Determination

Catherine Creek Loop Trail Bridge, CD-26-02-S

Parcel/Tax Lot #03112500000101, Klickitat County, Washington

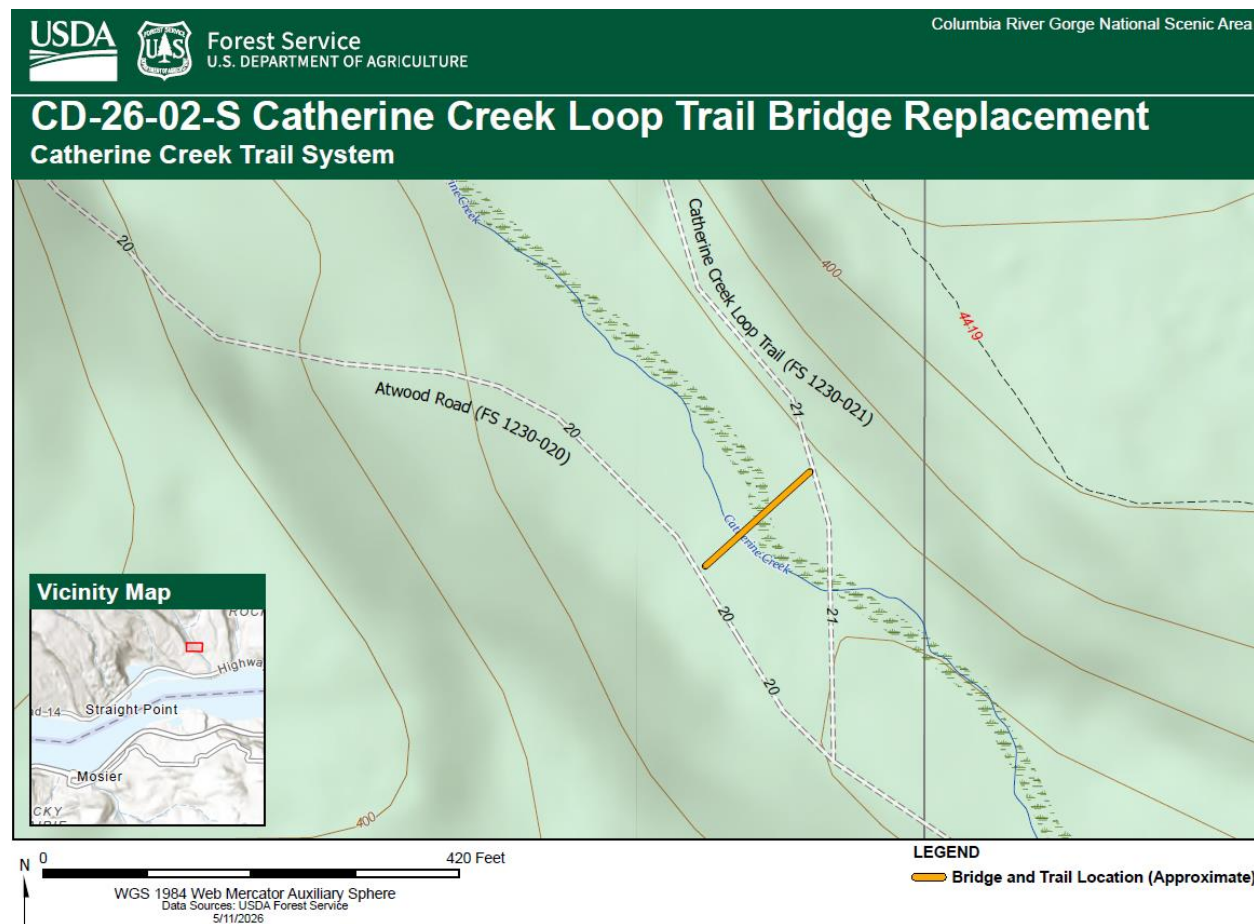
FINDINGS OF FACT

LANDOWNER:	USDA Forest Service
APPLICANT:	USDA Forest Service
PROPOSED ACTION:	Replace a trail bridge with an engineered bridge, and construct approximately 90' of trail.
LOCATION:	T03N R11E, E1/2 SE1/4 Sec 25, W.M.
NATIONAL SCENIC AREA DESIGNATION:	Special Management Area
LAND USE DESIGNATION:	Open Space
LANDSCAPE SETTING:	Gorge Walls, Canyons, and Wildlands

The following findings of fact contain the applicable standards and guidelines from the CRGNSA Management Plan. The Management Plan, as adopted in 2020, is in effect. The CRGNSA Management Plan standards and guidelines are displayed in regular type. The findings are displayed in **bold type**.



Project Site Plan



Public Comment

A notice describing the project was sent to a mailing list of known interested parties and adjacent landowners on May 13, 2026. A period of 30 days was allowed for public comment. The following comments were received:

Comment: Stefanie Berge, Wildlife Biologist with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, stated that the project was occurring within California mountain kingsnake habitat, which is a candidate for Washington State listing and protection. She requested that work occur outside the May to August nesting season, and preferably in December to February when the snakes hibernate. Stefanie recommended three project design criteria:

- *In areas where vegetation/debris or rocks/crevices are to be removed (areas of cover), someone shall clear those areas (survey and check for snakes) immediately prior to grading/removal of the habitat.*
- *If underground refugia is present (under rocks, burrows, or crevices), someone other than the equipment operator shall watch during the initial grading and stop equipment to move snakes out of the way, if any are seen.*



- *Once all refugia is cleared, no one should be needed to monitor work, but equipment operators should be aware and maybe check around and under anything left on-site overnight (including trucks/dozers) to make sure no snakes are present. If any are found either avoid the area until they leave on their own, or have someone move the snake out of the work area.*

Response: Review of potential effects to California mountain kingsnake is included in the Natural Resources section of the Consistency Determination.

Comment: Steve McCoy, Staff Attorney for Friends of the Columbia River Gorge, stated the applicable guidelines from the Management Plan for review. Steve also included specific comments regarding visibility from Key Viewing Areas, cumulative effects to scenic resources, and the presence of sensitive plants and wildlife in the area.

Response: Review of potential effects to all resources, including scenic resources and sensitive plants and wildlife, is included below.

Project Proposal

CRGNSA staff propose to replace the bridge over Catherine Creek, on the Catherine Creek Loop Trail (Forest Road 1230-021) near the connection with Atwood Road (Forest Road 1230-020). The bridge had been in poor condition, and in early 2026 CRGNSA staff determined it was unsafe for continued use and removed it. The replacement bridge will be a single-log stringer bridge, approximately 40 feet in length. The tree used for the bridge will be an existing fallen ponderosa pine located on site. The bridge will be placed on log sills embedded into the ground outside of the banks of Catherine Creek, and the trail will be graded slightly at the approaches to the bridge to account for the height of the bridge over the water. Stone retaining walls will be constructed between the sills and the approach trails. The bridge will be constructed slightly upstream of the location of the bridge that was removed. An approximately 90-foot-long section of new trail will be constructed to connect the new bridge to the existing Catherine Creek Loop Trail. The entirety of the project is within the 200-foot water resource buffer of Catherine Creek.

Land Use Designation

The proposed bridge and trail are located within an area designated SMA Open Space. SMA Open Space Review Use 1.C allows “Low-intensity recreation uses and development, including educational and interpretive facilities, consistent with Part I, Chapter 4: Recreation Resources.” This area is designated Recreation Intensity Class 2, which allows all uses permissible in Recreation Intensity Class 1, which includes trails as a review use. Complete review for consistency with Part I, Chapter 4: Recreation Resources is included in the Recreation section of this document below.

Finding: The proposed bridge and trail are an allowable review use in SMA Open Space, subject to review for compliance with scenic, cultural, natural, and recreational resources guidelines.

Scenery

SMA Design Guidelines Based on Landscape Settings

Finding: The site is within the Gorge Walls, Canyons, and Wildlands Landscape Setting.



1. The following guidelines apply to all lands within SMA landscape settings regardless of visibility from KVAs (includes areas visible from KVAs as well as areas not visible from KVAs):

E. Gorge Walls, Canyonlands, and Wildlands: New development and land uses shall retain the overall visual character of the natural-appearing landscape.

- (1) Structures, including signs, shall have a rustic appearance, use nonreflective materials, have low contrast with the surrounding landscape, and be of a Cascadian architectural style.
- (2) Temporary roads shall be promptly closed and revegetated.
- (3) New utilities shall be below ground surface, where feasible.
- (4) Use of plant species non-native to the Columbia River Gorge shall not be allowed.

Finding: The proposed bridge will be constructed using timber and stone, and shall have a rustic appearance, consistent with the Cascadian architectural style. A condition of approval shall ensure that all metal fasteners or other materials used are non-reflective. The bridge will not noticeably contrast with the surrounding landscape due to its rustic appearance and screening by adjacent trees. The proposed trail will be native surface and will not contrast with the surrounding landscape.

No temporary roads are proposed. No utilities are proposed. The use of non-native plant species is not proposed. The bridge and trail will retain the overall visual character of the natural-appearing landscape. This guideline is met.

SMA Guidelines for Development and Uses Visible from KVAs

1. The guidelines in this section shall apply to proposed development on sites topographically visible from key viewing areas.

Finding: The site is topographically visible from the following Key Viewing Areas:

KVA	FOREGROUND	MIDDLEGROUND	BACKGROUND
Columbia River	X	X	
Interstate 84		X	X
Historic Columbia River Highway		X	X
Rowena Plateau and Tom McCall Viewpoint		X	X

2. New development and land uses shall be evaluated to ensure that the required scenic standard is met and that scenic resources are not adversely affected, including cumulative effects, based on the degree of visibility from key viewing areas.



Finding: The proposed bridge and trail have been evaluated using the scenic resource protection guidelines to ensure no adverse effects from the development. Because there are no adverse effects, there are no cumulative effects. This guideline is met.

3. The required SMA scenic standards for all development and uses are summarized in the following table:

LANDSCAPE SETTING	LAND USE DESIGNATION	SCENIC STANDARD
Coniferous Woodland, Oak-Pine Woodland	Forest (National Forest Lands), Open Space	Not Visually Evident
River Bottomlands	Open Space	Not Visually Evident
Gorge Walls, Canyonlands, Wildlands	Forest, Agriculture, Public Recreation, Open Space	Not Visually Evident
Coniferous Woodland, Oak-Pine Woodland	Forest, Agriculture, Residential, Public Recreation	Visually Subordinate
Residential	Residential	Visually Subordinate
Pastoral	Forest, Agriculture, Public Recreation, Open Space	Visually Subordinate
River Bottomlands	Forest, Agriculture, Public Recreation	Visually Subordinate

Finding: The proposed bridge and trail are in an area designated SMA Open Space, within the Gorge Walls, Canyons, and Wildlands landscape setting. The applicable scenic standard is *Not Visually Evident*.

4. In all landscape settings, scenic standards shall be met by blending new development with the adjacent natural landscape elements rather than with existing development.

Finding: The proposed bridge will be constructed using timber and stone, and will blend with the horizontal features of the surrounding cliffs and bluffs common to the eastern Gorge. The trail will be native surface and will appear as a natural landscape element. This guideline is met.

5. Proposed development or land uses shall be sited to achieve the applicable scenic standard. Development shall be designed to fit the natural topography, to take advantage of landform and vegetation screening, and to minimize visible grading or other modifications of landforms, vegetation cover, and natural characteristics. When screening of development is needed to meet the scenic standard from key viewing areas, use of existing topography and vegetation shall be given priority over other means of achieving the scenic standard such as planting new vegetation or using artificial berms.

Finding: The location of the proposed bridge is dictated in part by the location of the bridge that was removed in winter 2026. The proposed bridge is adjacent to existing trails and minimizes the need for additional trail construction. The proposed bridge was also sited to provide adequate support for an engineered structure that would provide a stable and safe route over Catherine Creek. The proposed bridge is screened from KVAs using the topography of the Catherine Creek drainage and by the larger vegetation growing in



the Catherine Creek riparian area. The proposed trail will also be screened by existing vegetation. The proposed bridge and trail are sited to achieve the *Not Visually Evident* standard. This guideline is met.

6. The extent and type of conditions applied to a proposed development or use to achieve the scenic standard shall be proportionate to its degree of visibility from key viewing areas.

A. Decisions shall include written findings addressing the factors influencing the degree of visibility, including but not limited to:

- (1) The amount of area of the building site exposed to key viewing areas,
- (2) The degree of existing vegetation providing screening,
- (3) The distance from the building site to the key viewing areas from which it is visible,
- (4) The number of key viewing areas from which it is visible, and
- (5) The linear distance along the key viewing areas from which the building site is visible (for linear key viewing areas, such as roads).

B. Conditions may be applied to various elements of proposed developments to ensure they meet the scenic standard for their setting as visible from key viewing areas, including but not limited to:

- (1) Siting (location of development on the subject property, building orientation, and other elements),
- (2) Retention of existing vegetation,
- (3) Design (form, line, color, texture, reflectivity, size, shape, height, architectural and design details and other elements), and
- (4) New landscaping.

Finding: The proposed bridge and trail are visible within the foreground of the Columbia River KVA at a closest distance of approximately .48 miles southwest of the building site, as evaluated using KVA Visibility Layers developed by the Gorge Commission and Forest Service. At this closest point, the bridge and trail will not be visible to the casual observer due to their small size, their rustic and natural appearance, and the intervening topography and vegetation, including the topography and vegetation located on the subject parcel at the building site. As such, the bridge and trail will also not be visible from the other listed KVAs, which are all farther away from the building site than this point on the Columbia River. A condition of approval will require the retention of existing vegetation to ensure continued screening. This guideline is met.

7. Sites approved for new development to achieve scenic standards shall be consistent with guidelines to protect wetlands, riparian corridors, sensitive plant or wildlife sites and the buffer zones of each of these natural resources, and guidelines to protect cultural resources.



Finding: Consistency with the natural and cultural resource guidelines is discussed below. The proposal is consistent with these guidelines. This guideline is met.

8. Proposed development shall not protrude above the line of a bluff, cliff, or skyline as visible from key viewing areas.

Finding: The proposed bridge and trail do not protrude above the line of a bluff, cliff, or skyline as visible from key viewing areas. This guideline is met.

9. Structure height shall remain below the average tree canopy height of the natural vegetation adjacent to the structure, except if it has been demonstrated that meeting this guideline is not feasible considering the function of the structure.

Finding: The average tree canopy height adjacent to the structure is created primarily by Oregon white oak and ponderosa pine. The maximum height of the proposed bridge will be well under the average tree canopy height of these trees. This guideline is met.

10. The following guidelines shall apply to new landscaping used to screen development from key viewing areas:

A. New landscaping (including new earth berms) to achieve the required scenic standard from key viewing areas shall be required only when application of all other available guidelines in this chapter is not sufficient to make the development meet the scenic standard from key viewing areas. Development shall be sited to avoid the need for new landscaping wherever possible.

B. If new landscaping is necessary to meet the required standard, existing on-site vegetative screening and other visibility factors shall be analyzed to determine the extent of new landscaping, and the size of new trees needed to achieve the standard. Any vegetation planted pursuant to this guideline shall be sized to provide sufficient screening to meet the scenic standard within five years or less from the commencement of construction.

C. Landscaping shall be installed as soon as practicable, and prior to project completion. Applicants and successors in interest for the subject parcel are responsible for the proper maintenance and survival of planted vegetation, and replacement of such vegetation that does not survive.

D. The Scenic Resources Implementation Handbook shall include recommended species for each landscape setting consistent with the Landscape Settings Design Guidelines in this chapter, and minimum recommended sizes of new trees planted (based on average growth rates expected for recommended species).

Finding: No new landscaping is proposed. This guideline does not apply.

11. Unless expressly exempted by other provisions in this chapter, colors of structures on sites visible from key viewing areas shall be dark earth-tones found at the specific site or the surrounding landscape. The specific colors or list of acceptable colors shall be included as a condition of approval. The Scenic Resources Implementation Handbook shall include a recommended palette of colors as dark, or darker than the colors in the shadows of the natural features surrounding each landscape setting.



Finding: The bridge and trail will be constructed of natural materials found at the site in the surrounding landscape. No specific colors are proposed because the colors of the natural features of the materials used will provide sufficient protection of scenic resources as seen from Key Viewing Areas. Over time, weathering of the natural features will provide additional protection. This guideline is met.

12. The exterior of structures on lands seen from key viewing areas shall be composed of non-reflective materials or materials with low reflectivity. Continuous surfaces of glass shall be limited to ensure meeting the scenic standard. The Scenic Resources Implementation Handbook includes a list of recommended exterior materials and screening methods.

Finding: The proposed bridge and trail will be constructed primarily with nonreflective materials. A condition of approval shall require that any metal hardware is nonreflective, or is painted or treated to remove any visible reflectivity. This guideline is met.

13. Any exterior lighting shall be sited, limited in intensity, and shielded or hooded in a manner that prevents lights from being highly visible from key viewing areas and from noticeably contrasting with the surrounding landscape setting, except for road lighting necessary for safety purposes.

Finding: No exterior lighting is proposed. This guideline does not apply.

14. Seasonal lighting displays may be permitted on a temporary basis, not to exceed 3 months.

Finding: No seasonal lighting is proposed. This guideline does not apply.

15. New buildings shall be compatible with the general scale of existing nearby development. Expansion of existing development shall comply with this guideline to the maximum extent practicable. New buildings that are 1,500 square feet or less are exempt from this guideline. Findings addressing this guideline shall include but are not limited to:

- A. Application of the landscape setting design guidelines, if applicable.
- B. A defined study area surrounding the development that includes at least ten existing buildings, not including existing buildings within urban areas or outside the National Scenic Area.
- C. Individual evaluations of scale for each separate proposed building in the application and each separate building in the study area, including:
 - (1) All finished above ground square footage;
 - (2) Total area of covered decks and porches;
 - (3) Attached garages
 - (4) Daylight basements
 - (5) Breezeways, if the breezeway shares a wall with an adjacent building
 - (6) Dimensions, based on information from the application or on Assessor's records
- D. An overall evaluation demonstrating the proposed development's compatibility with surrounding development. Buildings in the vicinity of the proposed development that are



significantly larger in size than the rest of the buildings in the study area should be removed from this evaluation.

Finding: No new buildings are proposed. This guideline does not apply.

SMA Guidelines for KVA Foregrounds and Scenic Routes

Finding: The proposed bridge and trail are within the foreground of the Columbia River KVA.

1. All new development and land uses immediately adjacent to scenic routes shall be in conformance with state or county scenic route guidelines.

Finding: The proposed bridge and trail are not adjacent to a scenic route. This guideline does not apply.

2. Scenic highway corridor strategies shall be implemented for Interstate 84 (I84), Washington State Route 14 (SR 14) and the Historic Columbia River Highway (HCRH). For I-84, SR 14 and the HCRH, this involves ongoing implementation (and possible updating) of the associated existing documents.

3. The goals of scenic corridor strategies shall include:

- 1) providing a framework for future highway improvements and management that meet Management Plan scenic guidelines and public transportation needs; and
- 2) creating design continuity for the highway corridor within the National Scenic Area. Corridor strategies shall, at minimum, include design guidelines (e.g. materials, conceptual designs, etc.) for typical projects that are consistent with Management Plan scenic resources provisions and an interdisciplinary, interagency project planning and development process.

Finding: Guidelines 2 and 3 do not apply to proposed developments.

4. The following guidelines shall apply only to development within the immediate foregrounds of key viewing areas. Immediate foregrounds are defined as within the developed prism of a road or trail KVA or within the boundary of the developed area of KVAs such as Crown Pt. and Multnomah Falls. They shall apply in addition to applicable guidelines in the previous section (SMA Guidelines for Development Visible from KVAs).

A. The proposed development shall be designed and sited to meet the applicable scenic standard from the foreground of the subject KVA. If the development cannot meet the standard, findings must be made documenting why the project cannot meet the requirements in the previous section and why it cannot be redesigned or wholly or partly relocated to meet the scenic standard.

B. Findings must evaluate the following:

- (1) The limiting factors to meeting the required scenic standard and applicable guidelines from the previous section;
- (2) Reduction in project size;
- (3) Options for alternative sites for all or part of the project, considering parcel configuration and on-site topographic or vegetative screening;



(4) Options for design changes including changing the design shape, configuration, color, height, or texture in order to meet the scenic standard.

C. Form, line, color, texture, and design of a proposed development shall be evaluated to ensure that the development blends with its setting as visible from the foreground of key viewing areas:

(1) Form and Line - Design of the development shall minimize changes to the form of the natural landscape. Development shall borrow form and line from the landscape setting and blend with the form and line of the landscape setting. Design of the development shall avoid contrasting form and line that unnecessarily call attention to the development.

(2) Color - Color shall be found in the project's surrounding landscape setting. Colors shall be chosen and repeated as needed to provide unity to the whole design.

(3) Texture - Textures borrowed from the landscape setting shall be emphasized in the design of structures. Landscape textures are generally rough, irregular, and complex rather than smooth, regular, and uniform.

(4) Design - Design solutions shall be compatible with the natural scenic quality of the Gorge. Building materials shall be natural or natural appearing. Building materials such as concrete, steel, aluminum, or plastic shall use form, line color and texture to harmonize with the natural environment. Design shall balance all design elements into a harmonious whole, using repetition of elements and blending of elements as necessary.

Finding: The proposed bridge and trail are not within the immediate foreground of the Columbia River KVA. This guidelines does not apply.

5. Right-of-way vegetation shall be managed to minimize visual impacts of clearing and other vegetation removal as visible from key viewing areas. Roadside vegetation management (vista clearing, planting, etc.) should enhance views from the highway.

Finding: No vegetation management is proposed. This guideline does not apply.

6. Screening from key viewing areas shall be encouraged for existing and required for new road maintenance, warehouse, and stockpile areas.

Finding: The proposal is not new road maintenance, a warehouse, or stockpile area. This guideline does not apply.

SMA Guidelines for Areas Not Visible from KVAs

Finding: The proposed bridge and trail are visible from KVAs. These guidelines do not apply.



Cultural

SMA Guidelines

1. All cultural resource surveys, evaluations, assessments, and mitigation plans shall be performed by professionals whose expertise reflects the type of cultural resources that are involved. Principal investigators shall meet the professional standards published in 36 CFR 61.
2. For federal or federally assisted undertakings, the reviewing agency shall complete its consultation responsibilities under Section 106 of the Historic Preservation Act of 1966 [36 CFR 800.2].
3. Discovery during construction: All authorizations for new developments or land uses shall require the immediate notification of the reviewing agency if cultural resources are discovered during construction or development. If cultural resources are discovered, particularly human bone or burials, work in the immediate area of discovery shall be suspended until a cultural resource professional can evaluate the potential significance of the discovery and recommend measures to protect and if possible recover the resource. If the discovered material is suspected to be human bone or a burial, the following procedures shall be used:
 - A. The applicant shall stop all work in the vicinity of the discovery.
 - B. The applicant shall immediately notify the Forest Service, the applicant's cultural resource professional, the county coroner, and appropriate law enforcement agencies.
 - C. The Forest Service shall notify the tribal governments if the discovery is determined to be an Indian burial or a cultural resource.
4. Reviewing agencies shall use the [...] steps under 36 CFR 800.4 for assessing potential effects to cultural resources and 36 CFR 800.5 for assessing adverse effects to cultural resources. [The Management Plan includes descriptions of these steps. The descriptions have been removed from this document.]
5. Determination of potential effects to significant cultural resources shall include consideration of cumulative effects of proposed developments that are subject to any of the following: 1) a reconnaissance or historic survey; 2) a determination of significance; 3) an assessment of effect; or 4) a mitigation plan.

Finding: A cultural resource report was prepared by CRGNSA Heritage Resource staff for the proposed bridge and trail. The report was submitted to Washington DAHP and the Tribes on May 25, 2026. The 30-day review period ended on June 24, 2026. Heritage Resource staff determined that the proposed treatments would have no effect to historic properties (36 CFR 800.4(d)(1)). Washington DAHP concurred. No comment was received from the Tribes. These guidelines are met.

A condition of approval shall require that the inadvertent discovery procedure described above is followed in the event that cultural resources are discovered during construction.



Natural Resources

SMA Guidelines: Water Resources / Wildlife and Plants

1. All new development and uses, as described in a site plan prepared by the applicant, shall be evaluated using the following guidelines to ensure that natural resources are protected from adverse effects.

Cumulative effects analysis is not required for expedited review uses or development. Comments from state and federal agencies shall be carefully considered. (Site plans are described under “Review Uses” in Part II, Chapter 7: General Policies and Guidelines.)

2. Water Resources (Wetlands, Streams, Ponds, Lakes, and Riparian Areas)

A. All Water Resources shall, in part, be protected by establishing undisturbed buffer zones as specified in 2.A.(2)(a) and 2(b) below. These buffer zones are measured horizontally from a wetland, stream, lake, or pond boundary as defined below.

(1) All buffer zones shall be retained undisturbed and in their natural condition, except as permitted with a mitigation plan.

(2) Buffer zones shall be measured outward from the bank full flow boundary for streams, the high water mark for ponds and lakes, the normal pool elevation for the Columbia River, and the wetland delineation boundary for wetlands on a horizontal scale that is perpendicular to the wetlands, stream, pond or lake boundary. On the main stem of the Columbia River above Bonneville Dam, buffer zones shall be measured landward from the normal pool elevation of the Columbia River. The following buffer zone widths shall be required:

(a) A minimum 200-foot buffer on each wetland, pond, lake, and each bank of a perennial or fish bearing stream, some of which can be intermittent.

(b) A 50-foot buffer zone along each bank of intermittent (including ephemeral), non-fish bearing streams.

(c) Maintenance, repair, reconstruction and realignment of roads and railroads within their rights-of-way shall be exempted from the wetlands and riparian guidelines upon demonstration of all of the following:

(i) The wetland within the right-of-way is a drainage ditch not part of a larger wetland outside of the right-of-way.

(ii) The wetland is not critical habitat.

(iii) Proposed activities within the right-of-way would not adversely affect a wetland adjacent to the right-of-way.

(3) The buffer width shall be increased for the following:

(a) When the channel migration zone exceeds the recommended buffer width, the buffer width shall extend to the outer edge of the channel migration zone.



(b) When the frequently flooded area exceeds the recommended riparian buffer zone width, the buffer width shall be extended to the outer edge of the frequently flooded area.

(c) When an erosion or landslide hazard area exceeds the recommended width of the buffer, the buffer width shall be extended to include the hazard area.

(4) Buffer zones can be reconfigured if a project applicant demonstrates all the following: (1) the integrity and function of the buffer zone is maintained, (2) the total buffer area on the development proposal is not decreased, (3) the width reduction shall not occur within another buffer, and (4) the buffer zone width is not reduced more than 50% at any particular location. Such features as intervening topography, vegetation, man-made features, natural plant or wildlife habitat boundaries, and flood plain characteristics could be considered.

(5) Requests to reconfigure buffer zones shall be considered if an appropriate professional (botanist, plant ecologist, wildlife biologist, or hydrologist) hired by the project applicant (1) identifies the precise location of the rare wildlife/plant or water resource, (2) describes the biology of the rare wildlife/plant or hydrologic condition of the water resource, and (3) demonstrates that the proposed use will not have any negative effects, either direct or indirect, on the affected wildlife/plant and their surrounding habitat that is vital to their long-term survival or water resource and its long-term function.

(6) The local government shall submit all requests to re-configure rare wildlife/plant or water resource buffers to the Forest Service and the appropriate state agencies for review. All written comments shall be included in the project file. Based on the comments from the state and federal agencies, the local government will make a final decision on whether the reconfigured buffer zones are justified. If the final decision contradicts the comments submitted by the federal and state agencies, the local government shall justify how it reached an opposing conclusion.

Finding: The proposed bridge and trail are located over and adjacent to Catherine Creek, which is an intermittent, fish bearing stream. Catherine Creek therefore has a 200-foot buffer zone, and the proposed bridge and trail are located within the buffer.

B. When a buffer zone is disturbed by a new use, it shall be replanted with only native plant species of the Columbia River Gorge.

Finding: A condition of approval shall require reseedling of disturbed areas with native plant species, as recommended by the CRGNSA Botanist.

C. The applicant shall be responsible for identifying all water resources and their appropriate buffers (see above).

Finding: The water resources and buffers were identified. This guideline is met.

D. Wetlands Boundaries shall be delineated using the following:



(1) The approximate location and extent of wetlands in the National Scenic Area is shown on the National Wetlands Inventory (U.S. Department of the Interior). In addition, the list of hydric soils and the soil survey maps shall be used as an indicator of wetlands.

(2) Some wetlands may not be shown on the wetlands inventory or soil survey maps. Wetlands that are discovered by the local planning staff during an inspection of a potential project site shall be delineated and protected.

(3) The project applicant shall be responsible for determining the exact location of a wetlands boundary. Wetlands boundaries shall be delineated using the procedures specified in the 'Corps of Engineers Wetland Delineation Manual (on-line edition)' and applicable Regional Supplements.

(4) All wetlands delineations shall be conducted by a professional who has been trained to use the federal delineation procedures.

Finding: There are no wetlands in the project area. This guideline does not apply.

E. Stream, pond, and lake boundaries shall be delineated using the bank full flow boundary for streams and the high water mark for ponds and lakes. The project applicant shall be responsible for determining the exact location of the appropriate boundary for the water resource.

Finding: The proposed bridge and trail do not extend more than 200 feet past the bank of Catherine Creek. Therefore, the entirety of the project is within the stream buffer, and delineation is unnecessary. This guideline does not apply.

F. The local government may verify the accuracy of, and render adjustments to, a bank full flow, high water mark, normal pool elevation (for the Columbia River), or wetland boundary delineation. If the adjusted boundary is contested by the project applicant, the local government shall obtain professional services, at the project applicant's expense, or the local government will ask for technical assistance from the Forest Service to render a final delineation.

Finding: The applicant is the Forest Service. This guideline does not apply.

G. Buffer zones shall be undisturbed unless the following criteria have been satisfied

H. The proposed use must have no practicable alternative as determined by the practicable alternative test.

(1) Those portions of a proposed use that have a practicable alternative will not be located in wetlands, stream, pond, lake, and riparian areas or their buffer zone.

(2) Filling and draining of wetlands shall be prohibited with exceptions related to public safety or restoration/enhancement activities as permitted when all of the following criteria have been met:

(a) A documented public safety hazard exists or a restoration/ enhancement project exists that would benefit the public and is corrected or achieved only by impacting the wetland in question, and



(b) Impacts to the wetland must be the last possible documented alternative in fixing the public safety concern or completing the restoration/enhancement project, and

(c) The proposed project minimizes the impacts to the wetland.

(3) Unavoidable impacts to wetlands and aquatic and riparian areas and their buffer zones shall be offset by deliberate restoration and enhancement or creation (wetlands only) measures as required by the completion of a SMA mitigation plan.

Finding: The proposed bridge and trail are located within the buffer zone of Catherine Creek. The proposal does not have a practicable alternative, as described below. The proposal will restore disturbed areas with native plant seed, and trails will be constructed for Forest Service standards ensuring erosion controls are present.

I. Proposed uses and development within wetlands, streams, ponds, lakes, riparian areas and their buffer zones shall be evaluated for cumulative effects to natural resources and cumulative effects that are adverse shall be prohibited.

Finding: Effects from the proposed bridge and trail will be temporary, associated with potential erosion and sedimentation from construction of the footings, the approaches to the bridge, and the trail itself. These effects will occur during periods when Catherine Creek is not actively flowing, reducing their intensity. The bridge will direct recreation use to one crossing over the bridge, limiting the erosion of user-created crossings through Catherine Creek. The construction of the bridge and trail will not measurably increase sedimentation load in Catherine Creek.

No additional bridges are proposed or anticipated to be proposed on trails that cross over Catherine Creek or Major Creek. Bridges are a common feature of trails in the National Scenic Area, and are evaluated for impacts to water resources before construction. Because no additional bridges are anticipated in the watershed, and because bridges are reviewed for impacts before construction, no cumulative effects are expected. There are no adverse cumulative effects from the proposed bridge and trail.

3. Wildlife and Plants

A. Protection of wildlife/plant areas and sites shall begin when proposed new development or uses are within 1000 feet of a rare wildlife or rare plant area or site. Rare wildlife areas are those areas depicted in wildlife data, including all sensitive wildlife sites and Priority Habitats listed in this Chapter. The approximate locations of rare wildlife and rare plant areas and sites are shown in wildlife and rare plant data.

Finding: The CRGNSA Botanist and Wildlife Biologist reviewed the proposed bridge and trail. Public comment highlighted the following wildlife and plant species as potentially impacted by the proposed bridge and trail:



- **California mountain kingsnake**
- **Northwest pond turtle**
- **Western gray squirrel**

- *Penstemon barrettiae*
- *Scribneria bolanderi*
- *Collinsia sparsiflora* var. *bruceae*

B. The local government shall submit site plans (of uses that are proposed within 1,000 feet of a rare wildlife or rare plant area or site) for review to the Forest Service and the appropriate state agencies (Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife or the Washington Department of Wildlife for wildlife issues and by the Oregon Biodiversity Information Center or Washington Natural Heritage Program for plant issues).

Finding: The Forest Service is the action agency and submitted an adequate site plan. This guideline is met.

C. The Forest Service wildlife biologists and botanists, in consultation with the appropriate state biologists, shall review the site plan and their field survey records. They shall:

- (1) Identify/verify the precise location of the wildlife or plant area or site,
- (2) Determine if a field survey will be required,
- (3) Determine, based on the biology and habitat requirements of the affected wildlife/plant species, if the proposed use would compromise the integrity and function of or result in adverse effects (including cumulative effects) to the wildlife and plant area or site. This would include considering the time of year when wildlife and plant species are sensitive to disturbance, such as nesting and rearing seasons, or flowering season, and,
- (4) Delineate the undisturbed 200-ft buffer on the site plan for rare plants or the appropriate buffer for rare wildlife areas or sites, including nesting, roosting, and perching sites.
 - (a) Buffer zones can be reconfigured if a project applicant demonstrates all of the following: (1) the integrity and function of the buffer zones is maintained, (2) the total buffer area on the development proposal is not decreased, (3) the width reduction shall not occur within another buffer, and (4) the buffer zone width is not reduced more than 50% at any particular location. Such features as intervening topography, vegetation, man made features, natural plant or wildlife habitat boundaries, and flood plain characteristics could be considered.
 - (b) Requests to reduce buffer zones shall be considered if an appropriate professional (botanist, plant ecologist, wildlife biologist, or hydrologist), hired by the project applicant, (1) identifies the precise location of the rare wildlife/plant or water resource, describes the biology of the rare wildlife/plant or hydrologic condition of the water resource, and (3) demonstrates that the proposed use will



not have any negative effects, either direct or indirect, on the affected wildlife/plant and their surrounding habitat that is vital to their long-term survival or to the water resource and its long-term function.

(c) The local government shall submit all requests to re-configure rare wildlife/plant or water resource buffers to the Forest Service and the appropriate state agencies for review. All written comments shall be included in the record of application and based on the comments from the state and federal agencies, the local government will make a final decision on whether the reduced buffer zone is justified. If the final decision contradicts the comments submitted by the federal and state agencies, the local government shall justify how it reached an opposing conclusion.

Finding: The CRGNSA Wildlife Biologist reviewed field survey records for sensitive wildlife in the area, including those highlighted by public comment, and determined that no additional survey was required. The Wildlife Biologist determined that there would be no effect to Northwestern pond turtle because there is no adequate habitat in or near the project area. The Wildlife Biologist determined that there would be no effect to Western gray squirrel because the proposed action will not remove squirrel habitat, and the maximum disruption to individual squirrels would be contained to the period of construction, after which there would be no further effects. The Wildlife Biologist determined that California mountain kingsnake was present in the area. The recommendations provided by WDFW are included as conditions of approval to ensure protection of the California mountain kingsnake. The Wildlife Biologist also recommended that salamanders and amphibians found during implementation should be moved 100 feet downstream. That recommendation is included as a condition of approval.

The CRGNSA Botanist reviewed field survey records for sensitive plant species in the area, including those highlighted by public comment, and determined that no additional survey was required. The Botanist determined that there would be no effect to *Penstemon barrettiae* because there is no adequate habitat in or near the project area. The Botanist determined that *Scribneria bolanderi* and *Collinsia sparsiflora* var. *bruceae* present in or near the project area would be growing in disturbed areas. While the effect of bridge and trail construction may affect individuals of these species, a bridge will overall reduce impacts to these species by focusing visitor use through one area and trail. This guideline is met.

D. The local government, in consultation with the state and federal wildlife biologists and botanists, shall use the following criteria in reviewing and evaluating the site plan to ensure that the proposed development or uses do not compromise the integrity and function of or result in adverse effects to the wildlife and plant area or site:

- (1) Published guidelines regarding the protection and management of the affected wildlife/plant species. Examples include: the Oregon Department of Forestry management guidelines for osprey and great blue heron; Washington Department of



Wildlife guidelines for a variety of species, including the western pond turtle, the peregrine falcon, and the Larch Mountain salamander.

(2) Physical characteristics of the subject parcel and vicinity, including topography and vegetation.

(3) Historic, current, and proposed uses in the vicinity of the rare wildlife/plant area or site.

(4) Existing condition of the wildlife/plant area or site and the surrounding habitat of the area or site.

(5) In areas of winter range, habitat components, such as forage and thermal cover, important to the viability of the wildlife must be maintained or, if impacts are to occur, enhancement must mitigate the impacts so as to maintain overall values and function of winter range.

(6) The site plan is consistent with published guidance documents such as "Oregon Guidelines for Timing of In-Water Work to Protect Fish and Wildlife Resources" (Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife 2008 or most recent version) and Washington's Aquatic Habitat Guidelines (2002 or most recent version).

(7) The site plan activities coincide with periods when fish and wildlife are least sensitive to disturbance. These would include, among others, nesting and brooding periods (from nest building to fledgling of young) and those periods specified.

(8) The site plan illustrates that new development and uses, including bridges, culverts, and utility corridors, shall not interfere with fish and wildlife passage.

(9) Maintain, protect, and enhance the integrity and function of Priority Habitats as listed on the following Priority Habitats Table 1. This includes maintaining structural, species, and age diversity, maintaining connectivity within and between plant communities, and ensuring that cumulative impacts are considered in documenting integrity and function.

Finding: CRGNSA staff reviewed the above information. This guideline is met.

E. The wildlife/plant protection process may terminate if the local government, in consultation with the Forest Service and state wildlife agency or heritage program, determines (1) the rare wildlife area or site is not active, or (2) the proposed use is not within the buffer zones and would not compromise the integrity of the wildlife/plant area or site, or (3) the proposed use is within the buffer and could be easily moved out of the buffer by simply modifying the project proposal (site plan modifications). If the project applicant accepts these recommendations, the local government shall incorporate them into its development review order and the wildlife/plant protection process may conclude.

Finding: CRGNSA staff determined that the proposed bridge and trail, as conditioned, will not compromise the integrity of any wildlife/plant area or site. Review for protection of these species may conclude.



F. If the above measures fail to eliminate the adverse effects, the proposed project shall be prohibited, unless the project applicant can meet the Practicable Alternative Test and prepare a mitigation plan to offset the adverse effects by deliberate restoration and enhancement.

Finding: This guideline does not apply.

G. The local government shall submit a copy of all field surveys (if completed) and mitigation plans to the Forest Service and appropriate state agencies. The local government shall include all comments in the record of application and address any written comments submitted by the state and federal wildlife agency/heritage programs in its development review order.

Finding: The Forest Service is the action agency. This guideline does not apply.

H. Based on the comments from the state and federal wildlife agency/heritage program, the local government shall make a final decision on whether the proposed use would be consistent with the wildlife/plant policies and guidelines. If the final decision contradicts the comments submitted by the state and federal wildlife agency/heritage program, the local government shall justify how it reached an opposing conclusion.

Finding: The Forest Service is the action agency. This guideline does not apply.

I. The local government shall require the project applicant to revise the mitigation plan as necessary to ensure that the proposed use would not adversely affect a rare wildlife/plant area or site.

Finding: No mitigation plan is required. This guideline does not apply.

4. Soil Productivity

A. Soil productivity shall be protected using the following guidelines:

- (1) A description or illustration showing the mitigation measures to control soil erosion and stream sedimentation.
- (2) New developments and land uses shall control all soil movement within the area shown on the site plan.
- (3) The soil area disturbed by new development or land uses, except for new cultivation, shall not exceed 15 percent of the project area.
- (4) Within 1 year of project completion, 80 percent of the project area with surface disturbance shall be established with effective native ground cover species or other soil-stabilizing methods to prevent soil erosion until the area has 80 percent vegetative cover.

Finding: CRGNSA staff reviewed the proposed bridge and determined that the minimal slope, retaining walls, and construction during dry periods will control soil erosion and stream sedimentation. The trail will also have minimal slope and will be constructed to minimize potential erosion. The bridge and trail will not disturb more than 15% of the soil area on the parcel. Disturbed areas will be reseeded with a native plant species mix approved by the CRGNSA Botanist. This guideline is met.



Practicable Alternative Test

1. An alternative site for a proposed use shall be considered practicable if it is available and the proposed use can be undertaken on that site after taking into consideration cost, technology, logistics, and overall project purposes.
2. A practicable alternative does not exist if a project applicant satisfactorily demonstrates all of the following:
 - A. The basic purpose of the use cannot be reasonably accomplished using one or more other sites in the vicinity that would avoid or result in less adverse effects on wetlands, ponds, lakes, riparian areas, or wildlife or plant areas or sites.
 - B. The basic purpose of the use cannot be reasonably accomplished by reducing its proposed size, scope, configuration, or density, or by changing the design of the use in a way that would avoid or result in less adverse effects on wetlands, ponds, lakes, riparian areas, or wildlife or plant areas or sites.
 - C. Reasonable attempts were made to remove or accommodate constraints that caused a project applicant to reject alternatives to the proposed use. Such constraints include inadequate infrastructure, parcel size, and land use designations. If a land use designation or Recreation Intensity Class is a constraint, an applicant must request a Management Plan amendment to demonstrate that practicable alternatives do not exist.

Finding: The basic purpose of the bridge is to provide a safe and stable crossing over Catherine Creek during periods of inundation. The bridge by necessity must be over the creek, and is located where stable footings can be constructed to ensure the longevity of the bridge and safety of users. The proposed trail is ancillary to the bridge, required to connect the bridge to the existing Forest Roads used by visitors. The basic purpose of the bridge and trail cannot be reasonably accomplished at other sites, and the bridge and trail are the minimum size necessary to ensure safe and stable use. There are no physical or legal constraints on site that affected review of alternatives. The proposed bridge and trail have no practicable alternative.

Mitigation Plan

1. Mitigation Plans shall be prepared when:
 - A. The proposed development or use is within a buffer zone (wetlands, ponds, lakes, riparian areas, or wildlife or plant areas or sites).
 - B. There is no practicable alternative (see the “practicable alternative” test).

Finding: The proposed bridge and trail are within the buffer zone of Catherine Creek, and they have no practicable alternative. Forest Service guidelines for construction of trails and trail bridges and the conditions of approval included in the project ensure that there are no adverse impacts to protected resources. Because there are no adverse impacts to protected resources from project activities, a mitigation plan was not prepared for this project.



Recreation

SMA Guidelines

1. New development and land uses shall not displace existing recreational use.

Finding: The proposed bridge and trail will replace a previously existing bridge. The proposal does not displace existing recreational use. This guideline is met.

2. Recreation resources shall be protected from adverse effects by evaluating new development and land uses as proposed in the site plan. An analysis of both onsite and offsite cumulative effects shall be required.

Finding: The proposal is a component of the recreation resource and will have no adverse effects to recreation resources, including no adverse cumulative effects. This guideline is met.

3. New pedestrian or equestrian trails shall not have motorized uses, except for emergency services.

Finding: No motorized uses are proposed for the proposed bridge or trail. This guideline is met.

4. Mitigation measures shall be provided to preclude adverse effects on the recreation resource.

Finding: No adverse effects are anticipated from the proposal. This guideline does not apply.

5. The Facility Design Guidelines are intended to apply to individual recreation facilities. Development or improvements within the same Recreation Intensity Class are considered as separate facilities if they are separated by at least 1/4 mile of undeveloped land (excluding trails, pathways, or access roads).

Finding: The proposed bridge and trail are not a recreation facility. This guideline does not apply.

6. New development and reconstruction of scenic routes shall include provisions for bicycle lanes.

Finding: The proposal is not related to a scenic route. This guideline does not apply.

7. A local government may grant a variance of up to 10 percent to the guidelines of Recreation Intensity Class 4 for parking and campground units upon demonstration that all of the following conditions exist:

A. Demand and use levels for the proposed activity(s), particularly in the area where the site is proposed, are high and expected to remain so or increase. Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) data and data from the National Visitor Use Monitoring Program shall be relied upon to meet the criterion in the absence of current applicable studies.

B. The proposed use is dependent on resources present at the site.

C. Reasonable alternative sites offering similar opportunities, including those in urban areas, have been evaluated, and it has been demonstrated that the proposed use cannot be adequately accommodated elsewhere.



- D. The proposed use is consistent with the goals, objectives, and policies in this chapter.
- E. Through site design and mitigation measures, the proposed use can be implemented without adversely affecting scenic, natural, or cultural resources and adjacent land uses.
- F. Through site design and mitigation measures, the proposed use can be implemented without affecting or modifying treaty rights.

Finding: The proposal is not a parking area. This guideline does not apply.

8. Proposals to change the Recreation Intensity Class of an area shall require a Management Plan amendment pursuant to policies 1 through 4 in "Amendment of the Management Plan" (Part IV, Chapter 1: Gorge Commission Role).

Finding: The proposal does not consider changes to the Recreation Intensity Class. This guideline does not apply.

9. The Recreation Intensity Classes are designed to protect recreation resources by limiting land development and land uses.

Finding: Review for consistency with the Recreation Intensity Class guidelines is below.

Recreation Intensity Classes SMA Guidelines

1. Recreation Intensity Class 1 (Very Low Intensity)

Social Setting: Visitors in this designation have a high chance of finding solitude and opportunities to experience activities that rely on self-reliance, challenge and risk. Encounters with other visitors is low throughout the designation. Perceived crowdedness is low to non-existent away from roads recreation sites. Visitor encounters and perceived crowdedness is low to moderate at or near (within 1 mile) roads and recreation sites.

Physical and Managerial Setting: Predominately natural/natural appearing landscapes with rustic improvements characterize this designation. Nodes of developed recreation facilities may be allowed. Developed recreation site regulations and controls (signing, regulations or other regimentation) are noticeable but harmonize with the natural characteristics of the landscape setting. Away from developed recreation sites there is minimal or subtle control of users. Trail development is simple and typically accommodate low use levels. Users are highly skilled with a high degree of orienteering skills.

- A. The maximum design capacity for parking areas shall be 10 vehicles.
- B. The following uses may be permitted:
 - (1) Trails and trailheads.
 - (2) Parking areas.
 - (3) Dispersed campsites accessible only by a trail.
 - (4) Viewpoints and overlooks.
 - (5) Picnic areas.



- (6) Signs.
- (7) Interpretive exhibits and displays.
- (8) Restrooms.
- (9) Accommodations for mass transportation facilities should be considered where compatible with the social and physical settings.

2. Recreation Intensity Class 2 (Low Intensity)

Social Setting: RIC 2 is characterized by opportunities to experience relaxation, physical fitness and outdoor learning and where there is a moderate probability to experience solitude. Visitor encounters are low to moderate on trails and away from developed recreation sites and roads. Usually and moderate to high near (within 1 mile) recreation sites and roads.

Physical and Managerial Setting: Predominately natural/natural appearing landscapes with rustic improvements characterize this designation. Nodes of highly developed recreation facilities may be allowed. Developed recreation site regulations and controls (signing, regulations or other regimentation) harmonize with the natural characteristics of the landscape setting. Away from developed recreation sites there is minimal or subtle control of users. Trails are moderately developed (native surface or gravel, trail bridges and other facilities are provided for user convenience). Trail use is typically low to moderate. Trails are suitable for a wide range of users and are challenging and involve intermediate to advance skills. The following uses may be permitted.

A. The maximum design capacity for parking areas shall be 25 vehicles. All uses permitted in Recreation Intensity Class 1 are permitted in Recreation Intensity Class 2. The following uses may also be permitted:

- (1) Campgrounds for twenty (20) units or less, tent sites only.
- (2) Boat anchorages designed for no more than 10 boats at one time.
- (3) Swimming areas.
- (4) Accommodations for mass transportation facilities should be considered where compatible with the social and physical settings.

Finding: The proposed bridge and trail are located in an area designated Recreation Intensity Class 2. All uses allowed in RIC 1, including trails, are permitted in RIC 2. The proposed bridge and trail are collectively considered as a “trail” under this review use. The social setting for RIC 2 states that visitor encounters are moderate to high near recreation sites, which includes the Catherine Creek Trailhead; the bridge may entice visitors to linger, but overall the bridge and trail will provide access to the greater Catherine Creek trail system and will not have a noticeable effect on visitor encounters. The physical and managerial setting states that trails “are moderately developed (native surface or gravel, trail bridges and other facilities are provided for user convenience),” which is consistent with the proposed bridge and trail. The rustic construction of the bridge is consistent with the setting as well. This guideline is met.



Conclusion

The proposed bridge and trail are consistent with the National Scenic Area Management Plan Policy and Guidelines provided they meet the criteria and conditions listed in the Findings of Fact and Consistency Determination.



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