

Sturgis Non-motorized Trail Network Scoping Notice

**Black Hills National Forest
Northern Hills Ranger District
Meade County, South Dakota**

Purpose of and Need for Action

The City of Sturgis has proposed the construction of approximately 15.3 miles of non-motorized trail on National Forest System (NFS) land in the Northern Hills Ranger District (NHRD). The proposed trail would connect to existing trails on City of Sturgis, NFS and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land and provide non-motorized users a larger network of available trails in the Sturgis area.

Proposed Action

The City of Sturgis is proposing the construction and subsequent maintenance of approximately 15.3 miles of non-motorized trail across NFS land (see attached map). The Forest Service would not be responsible for construction or maintenance of the trail; those actions would be carried out by the City of Sturgis under a special use agreement with the Forest Service. The completed trail would be designated as a NFS trail, would be signed as such, and would appear on official Forest Service non-motorized trail maps.

The proposed trail would establish a multiple-loop trail network that connects to the City of Sturgis, the existing Centennial trail (Trail #89, administered by both the BLM and Forest Service) and existing trails on the Sturgis City Dams property (administered by the City of Sturgis). The looped trail system is centered on Vanocker Canyon immediately south of Sturgis and would provide a variety of mileage options for recreationists interested in hiking, backpacking, horseback riding, bicycling or running. The completed trail network would provide non-motorized access to Deadman Mountain, the Sturgis Dams, the Veteran's Peak area, and would link to the Centennial trail at three locations near Veteran's Peak, near Bulldog Gulch, and near Alkali Creek. The trail would primarily be single-track with a native dirt surface.

In conjunction with the establishment of the described trail network, one location has been identified for a potential trailhead on NFS land approximately three miles south of Sturgis (see attached map). An existing user-created parking area at the terminus of Forest System Road (FSR) 170.2C, which is immediately adjacent to Forest Highway (FH) 26 (Vanocker Canyon Road), would be improved and expanded to allow space for several vehicles to park. This location allows easy road access from Vanocker Canyon and easy trail access to Deadman Mountain and the Sturgis City Dams.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Compliance

Projects of this nature may be categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental assessment (EA) or environmental impact statement (EIS) per provisions at 36 CFR 220.6 provided no extraordinary circumstances exist. Specifically, construction and reconstruction of trails may be categorically excluded from documentation in an EA or EIS under 36 CFR 220.6(e)(1). Categorically excluded projects are not subject to objection, per regulations at 36 CFR 218. Although the decision on this proposal is final, comments on the proposal will be considered prior to making a decision.

Based on the input received during the project scoping period and review by agency resource specialists, the responsible official, District Ranger Steve Kozel, will determine whether to allow this activity to occur or whether additional analysis and public disclosure is required.

Public Open House

An open house will be held to provide information on the proposed trail network and to answer questions related to the proposal. This meeting will take place on Thursday, April 18, 2018, from 4:00-6:00 PM at the Sturgis Community Center, 1401 Lazelle St., Sturgis, SD.

Opportunity to Comment

Comments on this proposal can be submitted via mail, email, phone, fax, or in person. To make the best use of comments, we request that they are submitted within 30 days of the date of this letter.

Mailing Address: Steve Kozel
Attn: Sturgis Non-motorized Trails
Northern Hills Ranger District
2014 North Main Street.
Spearfish, SD 57783

Email Address: comments-rocky-mountain-black-hills-northern-hills@fs.fed.us
(Please include "Sturgis Non-motorized Trails" in the subject line.)

Phone: (605) 642-4622

Fax: (605) 642-4156

In Person: At the Northern Hills Ranger District office (address above) or at the public open house.

Contact Information

For more information about this project or the NEPA process, please contact Chris Stores, Acting Natural Resources Planner, at (605) 443-3081.