



Date: 7 May 2019

File Code: 1950

RE: Ice Caves Boardwalk NEPA

This documentation shows that the North Zone Interdisciplinary Team has completed review of the Ice Caves/Big Four Boardwalk replacement project.

Purpose and Need: Big Four trail is one of the heaviest used trails on the Mt. Baker Snoqualmie NF. It provides 1.25 miles of barrier free trail. The boardwalk through the beaver ponds provides visitors with views of Big Four, Stilligumish Peak, Dickerman, bird watching, and wildlife watching.

Proposed Action: In 1996 Big Four National Recreation area received funding for various improvements including construction of approximately 750' of boardwalk and 20 foot bridge. Now 23 years later the boardwalk is reaching the end of it's lifespan. The Project will replace the boardwalk and bridge.

Location: Township 30N; Range 10E; Section 22

A proposed action may be categorically excluded from further analysis and documentation in an environmental impact statement (EIS) or environmental assessment (EA) if there are no extraordinary circumstances or if the degree of the cause and effect relationship of the proposed action to the resource does not require additional analysis (36 CFR 220.6(b)) and if the proposed action is within one of the categories established by the Secretary at 7 CFR 1b.3; or within a category listed in 36 CFR 220.6 (d) and (e), per 36 CFR 220.6(a).

I have determined that the proposed action is categorically excluded from documentation in an Environmental Impact Statement or in an Environmental Assessment. This determination is based on the following findings:

Table 1. Extraordinary circumstances

Resource Condition	Are They Present?	Is there a Cause and Effect Relationship between the Project and the Extraordinary Circumstance?
Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species.	Yes	Consultation with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) on the effects of the proposed action on threatened and endangered wildlife species occurred under the USFS Regional Aquatic Restoration Biological Opinion (ARBO II, 2013). The project will have long-term recovery benefits to federally listed fish species which outweigh short-term impacts, while meeting conditions required by Region 6 (R6 Memorandum; August 29 th , 2013). The project as proposed would have No Effect on federally listed wildlife species of grizzly bear, gray wolf, marbled murrelet, spotted owl or the designated critical habitat for the spotted owl or marbled murrelet



Floodplains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds.	Yes	Project work within floodplain and the wetlands from the beaver dams would be consistent with a reduction of recreational impacts, described under the Regional General Permit 8 (RPG-8), that allows restoration activities designed to maintain, enhance and restore watershed functions in waters of the US National Forest in Washington State.
Congressionally designated areas, such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or national recreation areas.	No	There is no designated wilderness, wilderness study areas, National Recreation Areas, or Wild and Scenic Rivers within the decision area.
Inventoried Roadless Areas or Research Natural Areas	No	There are no inventoried Roadless areas in the decision area (Forest Plan FEIS and ROD 1990, RACR FEIS 2000, RACR ROD 2001). This decision will not affect inventoried Roadless areas. There are no Research Natural Areas in the decision area. This decision, with impacts limited to the immediate area of activity, will not affect Research Natural Areas.
American Indians and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites.	No	The sites were surveyed for the presence of cultural materials, and none were found. There are no known American Indian or Alaska Native religious or cultural sites.
Archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas.	No	There are no effects on cultural resources related to the proposed area of disturbance.

This action falls into the category of actions described in Forest Service Handbook 1909.15-2010-1, Chapter 30, 32.12 (36 CFR 220.6(d)(4)) Categories of actions for which a project or case file and decision memo are not required.

(4) Repair and maintenance of roads, trails, and landline boundaries.

I am approving this project with the following provisions:

- See attached conservation measures for Fisheries: "BMPs_IceCavesBoardwalk2019signed.pdf"
- RPG-8 general and special conditions

This use is consistent with land management plans and will not conflict with forest management objectives or applicable Federal regulations.



Joseph Garrotto
District Ranger

Enclosure(s): RPG-8, BMPs, Project Review for Heritage Resources, S. Hee/botany email, public scoping letter

