



Decision Memo

Bunchgrass Connection

USDA Forest Service
Middle Fork Ranger District
Willamette National Forest
Lane County, OR

T.22 S., R5.5 E., Sections 9, Willamette Meridian

Purpose and Need

The purpose of this project is to create a trail connection between the Bunchgrass segment of the Eugene to Crest Trail (3559) and the Fuji Mountain Trail (3674) to give off road bicyclists a legal trail option to access the Waldo Basin from the west.

The need for this project is to create a logical and efficient connection that is legal for cyclists to use. The project will eliminate the need for cyclists to ride on Forest Service Road (FSR) 5883 to avoid Wilderness trails while accessing the Waldo Basin from the trail system to the west. Bike-packing has become moderately popular and has recently added to the existing need for this connection between trail systems.

Proposed Action

The Middle Fork Ranger District in partnership with the Oregon Timber Trail Association proposes to build three miles of new Trail Class 3 trail from the intersection of a NFST access trail near the end of Forest Service Road 5883-381 to the intersection with the Fuji Mountain access trail (3674) intersection near the end of FSR 5883. The work will be accomplished with a mini-excavator where appropriate and finished by hand using volunteer labor in the summer of 2020.

Design Features/Criteria

The following is a list of design criteria and/or mitigation developed for this project to avoid/reduce the environmental effects of the proposed activities:

Wildlife:

NSO Habitat Modification

- Trees removed during trail building shall be between < 11" dbh, generally 3-15 per mile (well-spaced), not exceeding approximately 40 trees (2.7 miles).
- No trees with NSO (or NSO prey base) nest structures or cavities will be removed.

Fringed Myotis and Townsend's Big-eared Bat:

- The unit Wildlife Biologist shall provide clearance for the cutting of large standing snags (dead or partially dead) generally > 11" dbh, that exhibit cavities or sluffing bark.

Categorical Exclusion Criteria

I find that this project is within a category of actions established by the Chief of the Forest Service that do not individually or cumulatively have a significant effect on the human environment, and can be categorically excluded from documentation in an EA or EIS. The project fits under **32.2(1) Construction and Reconstruction of Trails, 36 CFR 220.6 (e)(1)** and a review has been completed to determine there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action.

Approving the construction of the Bunchgrass Connection can be categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement (EIS) or environmental assessment (EA) provided that no extraordinary circumstances exist.

Due to the nature of the actions under this decision, it is at my discretion as the Responsible Official, that a case file and Decision Memo have been prepared to disclose the level of analysis and potential impacts to the environment.

Table 1 outlines the resource conditions that must be considered in determining whether extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action warrant further analysis and documentation. During development of the proposed action, a team of resource specialists determined whether or not any of the resource conditions were present and the degree of the potential effects on the listed resource.

Table 1: Evaluation of Extraordinary Circumstances Related to the Proposed Action		
Extraordinary Circumstance to be Evaluated	Present? (Yes or No)	Degree of Potential Effect
Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species	MAYBE	Listed/Proposed T and E species - Northern Spotted Owl (NSO) habitat (non-critical) is present. Spotted Owls <i>may</i> be present. NLAA rating was given for NSOs. No other T and E species or habitat were present.
	NO	Designated/Proposed Critical habitat - None.
	NO	FS Sensitive species – None.
Floodplains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds	NO	None present.
Congressionally designated areas such as wilderness, wilderness study areas or national recreation areas	NO	None present in the project area.
Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRA) or potential wilderness areas	YES	This project is within the Waldo-Fuji IRA. See more information below this table.*
Research Natural Areas	NO	None present.

awaiting further instructions from an archaeologist. The remainder of the IRA would not be affected, and any existing cultural property and cultural sites would be not be disturbed by this project.

9. **Other locally identified unique characteristics:** Other than a small rock outcropping near the proposed trail, there are no particularly unique characteristics in the project area.

Decision and Rationale for Decision

Based on my review of the information presented in this document and the supporting documents in the project record, I have decided to implement the proposed action as described above.

Through past experience and review of similar projects, I have concluded that this project is not a major Federal action. It will have limited context and intensity (40 CFR1508.27), individually or cumulatively, to the biological, physical, social, or economic components of the human environment. It does not pose a violation of Federal, State, or local law requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

The action that I have selected falls within a category established by the Forest Service that normally does not individually or cumulatively have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment and no extraordinary circumstances exist that would cause the proposed action to have any significant environmental effects. Therefore this action is excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement or environmental assessment, so neither will be prepared.

Findings Required by Other Laws and Regulations

This decision is consistent with the amended Willamette National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan. The project was designed in conformance with Willamette Forest Plan direction for recreation activities within Inventoried Roadless Areas, General Forest and Semi-primitive non-motorized land allocations.

I find that this project complies with all laws, regulations and policies regarding the construction and maintenance of trails. The table below outlines the major laws, regulations and policies with respect to construction and maintenance of trails and displays how this project complies with those laws.

Table 2: Compliance with Other Laws, Regulations, and Policies			
Year Enacted	Title	Summary	How applied in this project
1897	Organic Act	This Law is the foundation for multiple use and Forest Service management of National Forest System Lands	Implementation of this project follows direction in this law for the Forest Service to manage National Forest System Lands.
1969	National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)	Creates the environmental impact statement (EIS) and environmental assessment (EA) as instruments of environmental policy. Requires public participation. Council on Environmental Quality regulations allow federal agencies	Scoping was conducted as required by NEPA. This project follows FSH 1909.15 Chapter 30 requirements for categorically excludable activities.



Implementation Date and Conditions Related to Implementation

Plans are to implement this project in summer of 2020 when soil conditions are appropriate for trail construction.

Contact Information

For further information, please contact Kevin A Rowell, (Recreation Specialist) at the Middle Fork Ranger District, 46375 Highway 58, Westfir, OR 97492 (541) 782-5305.

Approved by:

Feb 26, 2020

DECIDING OFFICIAL

Date

District Ranger (Acting)
Middle Fork Ranger District
Willamette National Forest

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