



File Code: 1570

Date: March 18, 2013

Mr. Allan E. Smolinski
PO Box 9
Caspian, MI 49915-0009

RE: Appeal of the Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact for the Eastern Off-Highway Vehicle Connector Route Project Environmental Assessment, Iron River, Kenton, and Ontonagon Ranger Districts, Ottawa National Forest, Appeal # 13-09-07-0015 A215

Dear Mr. Smolinski:

On January 28, 2013, you filed a notice of appeal pursuant to 36 C.F.R. Part 215 for the above referenced project on the Ottawa National Forest. The Decision Notice was signed by Forest Supervisor Anthony Scardina on December 12, 2012. The legal notice for the decision was published in *The Daily Globe* (Ironwood, Michigan) December 14, 2012.

I have reviewed the Project Record and considered the recommendation of the Appeal Reviewing Officer Timothy Dabney, Deputy Forest Supervisor, Superior National Forest, regarding the disposition of your appeal. The Appeal Reviewing Officer's review focused on the decision documentation developed by the Responsible Official for this project and the issues in your appeal. The Appeal Reviewing Officer's recommendation is enclosed and incorporated by reference. This letter constitutes my decision on your appeal and on the specific relief you requested.

FOREST ACTION BEING APPEALED

The purpose and need of this project is to determine which roads and trails would best serve to provide a connection between existing State of Michigan multi-use trails and other existing off highway vehicle (OHV) routes on the eastern portion of the Ottawa (east of US Highway 45). This would be accomplished through the use of existing forest roads and minor segments of new trail on National Forest System lands, as well as roads of other jurisdictions (i.e. county roads) that are currently open to OHV use. The Forest Plan includes emphasis on providing connections to existing designated public roads and trails and also provides direction to utilize existing corridors to the extent possible to minimize the need for new construction. The Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) prepared for the Forest Plan noted that the selected alternative "would also include designating new north-south connector routes, primarily for ATV use, between the established State of Michigan east/west multi-use trails" (FEIS p 2-11). The FEIS estimated the selected alternative would call for 25-75 miles of new routes, with a priority of providing connections to existing trail systems. The Forest Plan and FEIS clearly established a need for north-south connector routes and an objective to achieve these connections.



APPEAL REVIEWING OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATION

The Appeal Reviewing Officer found no evidence the Responsible Official's decision violated law, regulation, or policy. He found the decision responded to the comments raised during the decision-making process and public comment period. In addition, he found the issues in the appeal were adequately addressed in the decision documentation. Based on this review, the Appeal Reviewing Officer recommended the decision set forth in the Decision Notice for this project be affirmed. Please refer to the enclosed recommendation letter, dated March 14, 2013, for further details.

DECISION

After careful review of the Project Record and your appeal, as well as the recommendation of the Appeal Reviewing Officer, I have decided to affirm the decision for the OHV Connector Route. I found no violation of law, regulation, or policy with respect to the issues in your appeal. The Appeal Reviewing Officer's recommendation is enclosed and incorporated by reference.

Pursuant to 36 C.F.R. § 215.18(c), this decision constitutes the final administrative determination of the United States Department of Agriculture. This decision may be implemented on, but not before, the 15th business day following the date of this letter (See 36 C.F.R. § 215.9(b)).

Sincerely,

/s/ Mary Beth Borst

MARY BETH BORST
Appeal Reviewing Officer
Deputy Regional Forester

Enclosure

cc: Christine A Handler
Brian M Pentecost
Matthew Lechner
Patricia R Rowell
Mailroom R9 Ottawa