

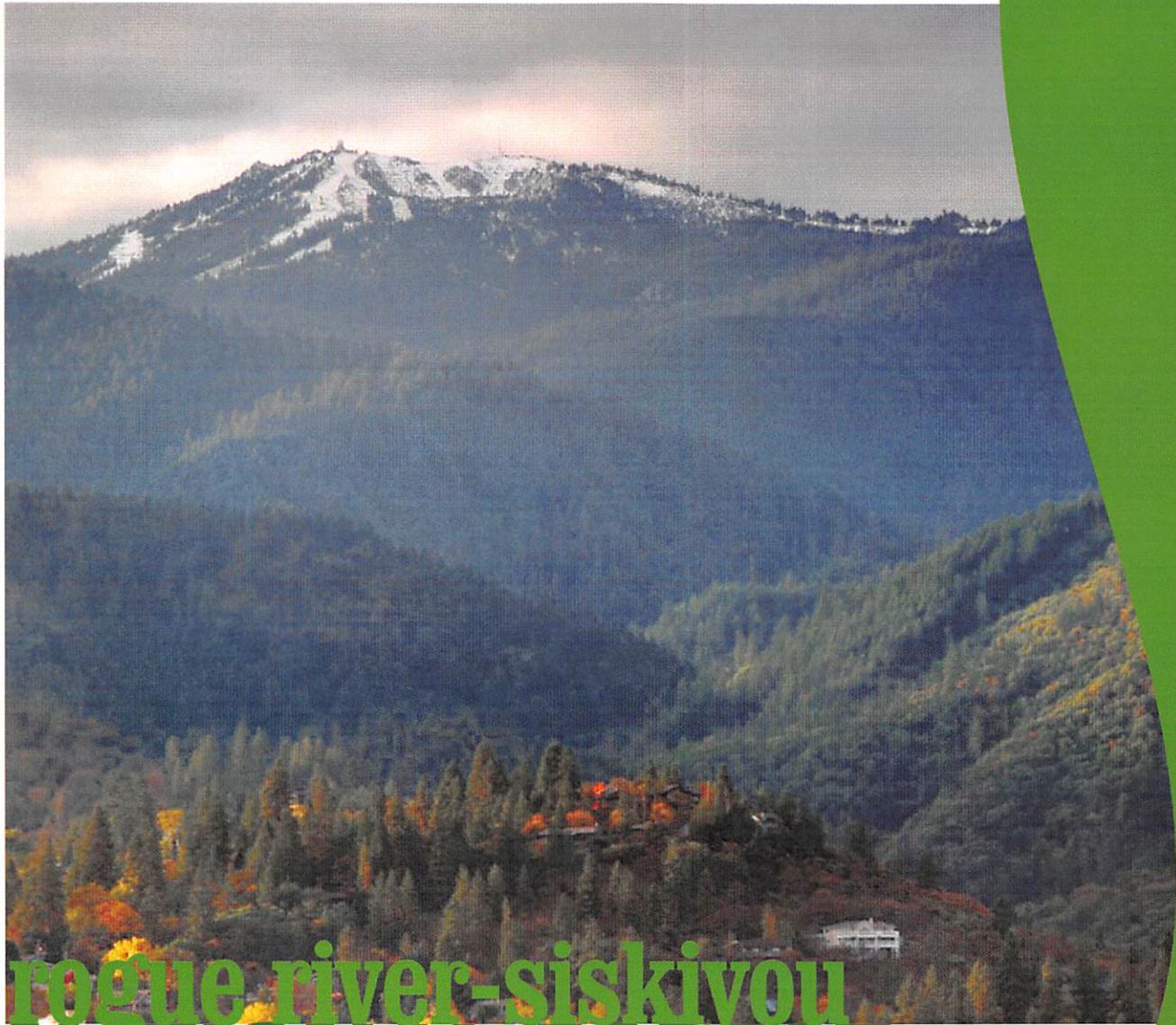


for the greatest good

Ashland Trails Project

Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact—
Siskiyou Mountains Ranger District

Jackson County, Oregon



rogue river-siskiyou
NATIONAL FOREST

December
2015

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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This Decision Notice documents my decision and rationale for the selection and modification of Alternative 3 of the Ashland Trails Project Environmental Assessment (EA). The Modified Alternative 3 of the Ashland Trails Project will provide approximately 24.9 miles of non-motorized trails in the vicinity of Ashland, Oregon and will close and rehabilitate 9.9 miles of existing unapproved trails to minimize impacts to natural resources.

Opportunity to comment on the EA was provided December 29, 2014 through February 6, 2015. All comments submitted during the comment period for the EA and throughout the planning process have been considered and evaluated.

The Ashland Trails Project is located on the Siskiyou Mountains Ranger District on the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest south of the City of Ashland. The action area is generally bound on the north by the City of Ashland; on the east and south by the Forest boundary, with the majority of the trail system proposed to the west and downslope of Forest Service Road 2080; and on the west by the Ashland Municipal Watershed boundary. About 1,200 feet of the 3.2 mile Split Rock trail is located within the Klamath National Forest boundary.

DECISION

It is my decision to implement a modified version of Alternative 3 as described below. I believe this decision best addresses the purpose and need for the proposed action in consideration of the comments received on the EA. This alternative will reduce user conflict through trail design, use designation, and management. Modified Alternative 3 will also provide an adequate and sustainable trail system that minimizes impacts to soil, water, cultural, vegetation, and wildlife resources and discourages unauthorized trail proliferation. The reasons for this decision are specifically provided in the section below *Rationale for the Decision*.

DESCRIPTION OF SELECTED ALTERNATIVE

Table 1 summarizes the modifications to the Managed Uses in Alternative 3 that are reflected in this decision. These changes to the Managed Uses were based on public comments and input gathered from the public meeting held in Ashland on January 8, 2015 and are implemented to further reduce user conflict by separating user groups.

Table 1- Trail Managed Uses - Modified Alternative 3

<i>Trail Name</i>	<i>Length (miles)</i>	<i>Managed Use Under Alternative 3</i>	<i>Managed Use Under Modified Alternative 3</i>
Wagner Glade	2.2	Hiker/Pedestrian, Bicycle, Equestrian	Hiker/Pedestrian
Split Rock	3.2	Hiker/Pedestrian, Bicycle, Equestrian	Trail will remain available for dispersed Hiker/ Pedestrian use but will be managed as a Class 1 Trail.
Caterpillar	0.5	Hiker/Pedestrian, Bicycle, Equestrian	Hiker/Pedestrian, Equestrian

Ashland Trails Project DN and FONSI

<i>Trail Name</i>	<i>Length (miles)</i>	<i>Managed Use Under Alternative 3</i>	<i>Managed Use Under Modified Alternative 3</i>
Alice in Wonderland	0.2	Bicycle	Hiker/Pedestrian, Bicycle, Equestrian
Jabberwocky	1.7	Hiker/Pedestrian, Bicycle	Bicycle
Wonder	1.3	Hiker/Pedestrian, Bicycle	Hiker/Pedestrian, Bicycle, Equestrian
Not Stirred	0.3	Hiker/Pedestrian, Bicycle	Hiker/Pedestrian, Bicycle, Equestrian
Upper Missing Link	1.2	Hiker/Pedestrian, Bicycle	Bicycle
Lower Missing Link	1.0	Hiker/Pedestrian, Bicycle	Bicycle

¹ See *Construction Specifics* below for discussion of how various trail classes are developed and maintained.

Table 2 summarizes the trail network and the Managed Uses associated with each trail in Modified Alternative 3.

Table 2- Trail Network- Modified Alternative 3

<i>Trail Name</i>	<i>Length (miles)</i>	<i>Managed Use</i>
Alice in Wonderland	0.2	Hiker/Pedestrian, Bicycle, Equestrian
Upper Time Warp	3.4	Bicycle
Wagner Glade	2.2	Hiker/Pedestrian
Split Rock	3.2	Hiker/Pedestrian
Lower Marty's	0.5	Hiker/Pedestrian, Bicycle
Jabberwocky	1.7	Bicycle
Fell on Knee	1.0	Hiker/Pedestrian, Bicycle
Upper Missing Link	1.2	Bicycle
Lower Missing Link	1.0	Bicycle
No Candies	2.5	Hiker/Pedestrian, Bicycle
Upper Eastview	1.3	Hiker/Pedestrian, Bicycle, Equestrian
Ric's	1.3	Hiker/Pedestrian, Equestrian
Wonder	1.3	Hiker/Pedestrian, Bicycle, Equestrian
Red Queen	1.2	Hiker/Pedestrian, Equestrian
Lewis Loop	1.1	Hiker/Pedestrian, Equestrian
Shaken	0.7	Hiker/Pedestrian, Bicycle, Equestrian
Not Stirred	0.3	Hiker/Pedestrian, Bicycle, Equestrian
Lizard	0.4	Bicycle

Ashland Trails Project DN and FONSI

<i>Trail Name</i>	<i>Length (miles)</i>	<i>Managed Use</i>
Bandersnatch	0.4	Hiker/Pedestrian, Equestrian
TOTAL	24.9	

Under Modified Alternative 3, the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest will incorporate approximately 24.9 miles of trails into the approved trail network in the action area, including 17.5 miles of existing historic and unapproved trails and 7.4 of new trails. These trails, along with the current System Trails, will be clearly marked to reflect what uses are permitted on each trail. In the eastside of the action area where use is highest and where conflict is greatest, effort was made to separate user groups as much as possible. On the westside of the action area and on trails that are further from the City of Ashland where use is much lower, multi-use trails will be developed to disperse use over a greater geographic area, thereby lessening trail use density and contact with other users.

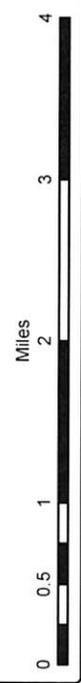
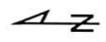
In addition, approximately 9.9 miles of existing unapproved trails that were identified by the interdisciplinary team as not sustainable (i.e., use is resulting in unacceptable adverse impacts to soil, water, cultural, vegetation, and wildlife resources) will be decommissioned.

Table 3- Decommissioned Trails

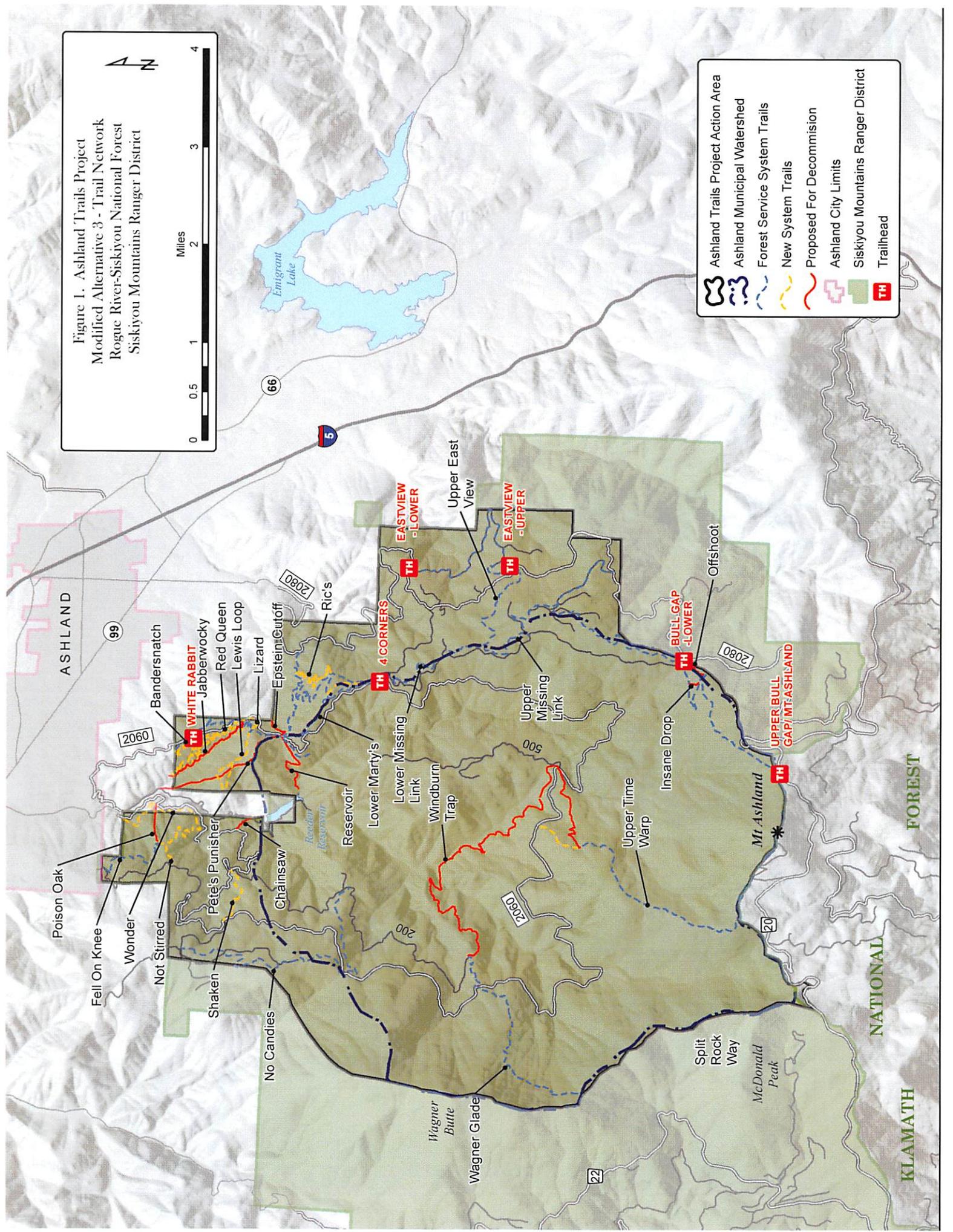
<i>Trail Name</i>	<i>Length (miles)</i>
Alice in Wonderland	0.2
Upper Time Warp	1.0
Winburn Trap	3.7
Lower Marty's	0.4
Jabberwocky	1.2
Chain Saw	0.2
Epstein Cut-Off	0.3
Insane Drop	0.1
Offshoot	0.3
Pete's Punisher	1.3
Poison Oak	0.3
Reservoir (East Fork)	0.9
TOTAL	9.9

Modified Alternative 3 (Figure 1) best meets the need to provide a sustainable non-motorized trail system in the vicinity of Ashland; commensurate with current public demand, and consistent with natural resource management responsibilities and Forest Service capabilities.

Figure 1. Ashland Trails Project
 Modified Alternative 3 - Trail Network
 Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest
 Siskiyou Mountains Ranger District



- Ashland Trails Project Action Area
- Ashland Municipal Watershed
- Forest Service System Trails
- New System Trails
- Proposed For Decommission
- Ashland City Limits
- Siskiyou Mountains Ranger District
- Trailhead



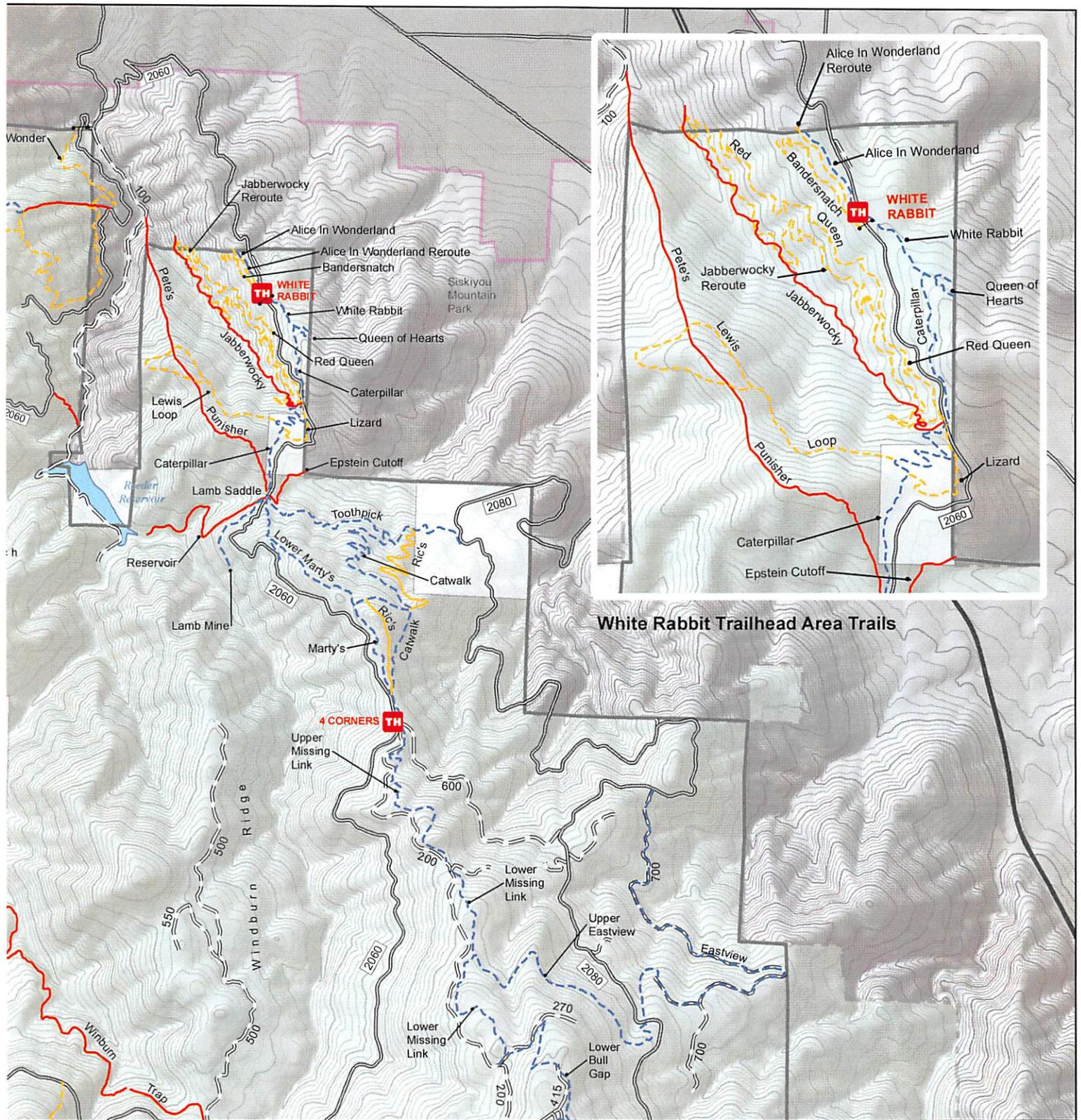
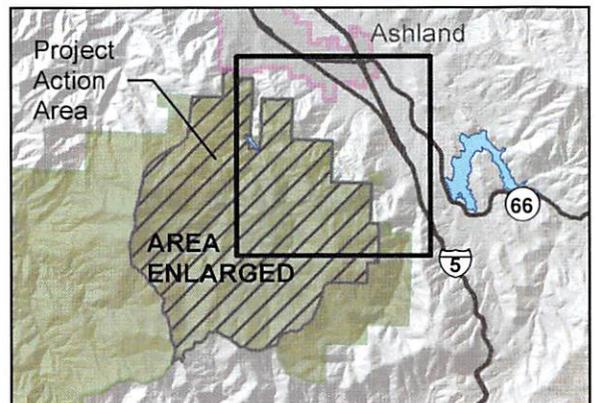


Figure 2. Trail Detail
Modified Alternative 3
Lower Eastside

- Gate
 - Trailhead
 - Forest Service System Trails
 - New System Trails
 - Proposed For Decommission
- Siskiyou Mountains Ranger District
Other Land, Including Private
- Feet
0 1,000 2,000 3,000 4,000 5,000



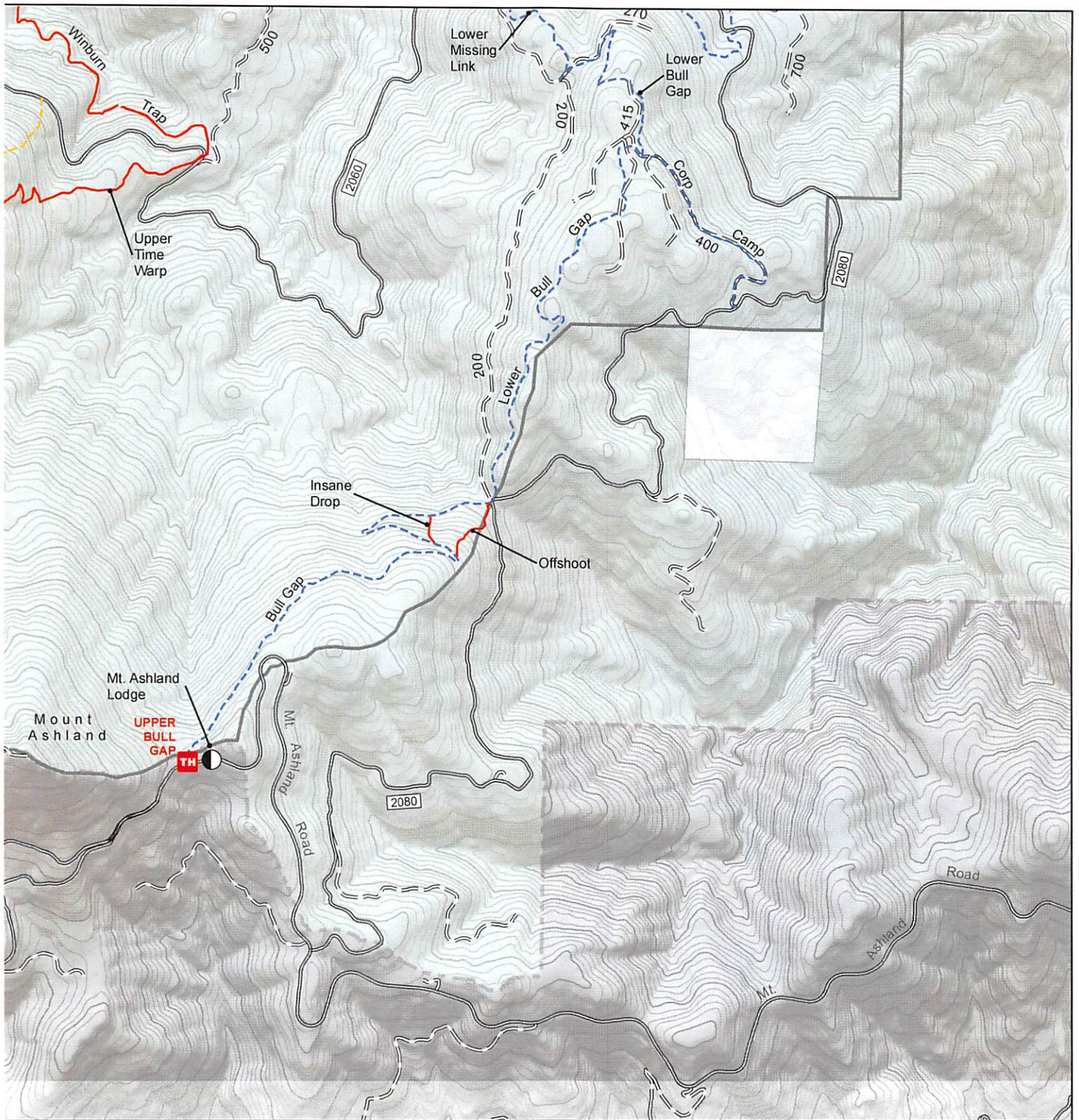
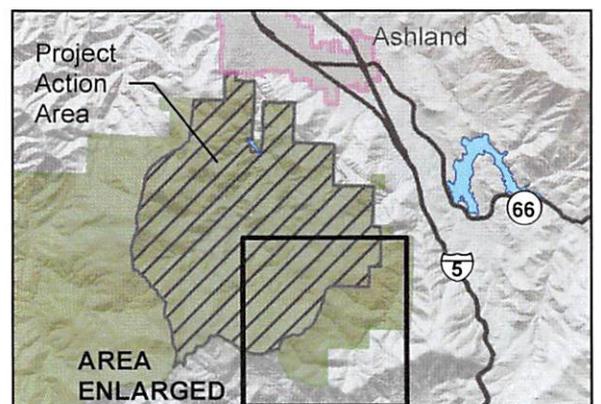


Figure 3. Trail Detail
Modified Alternative 3
Upper Eastside



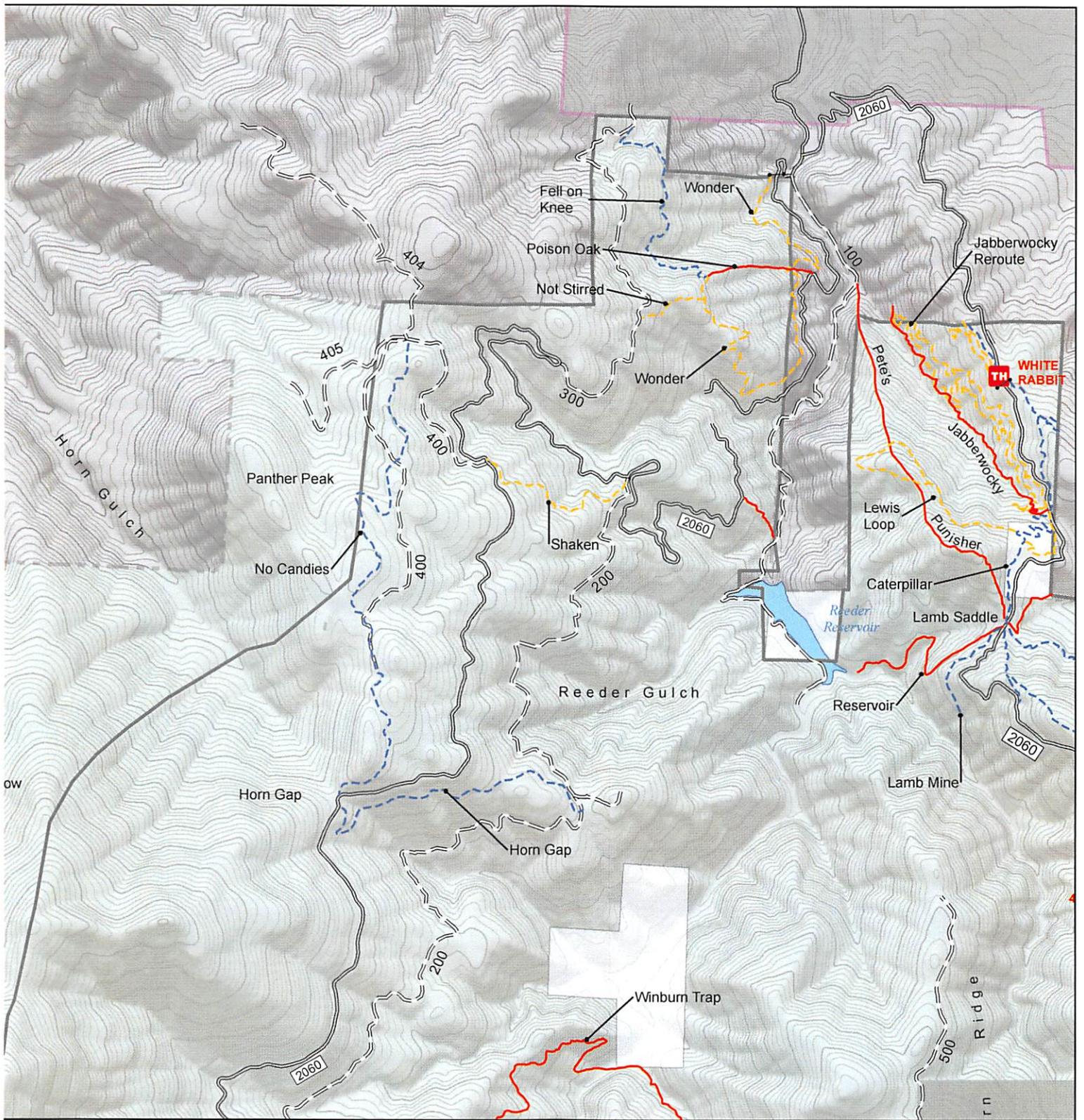
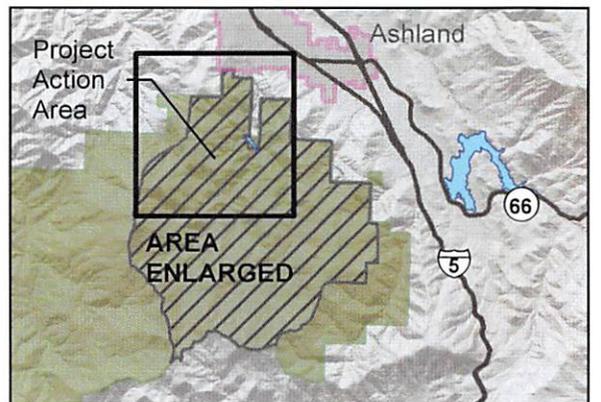


Figure 4. Trail Detail
Modified Alternative 3
Lower Westside



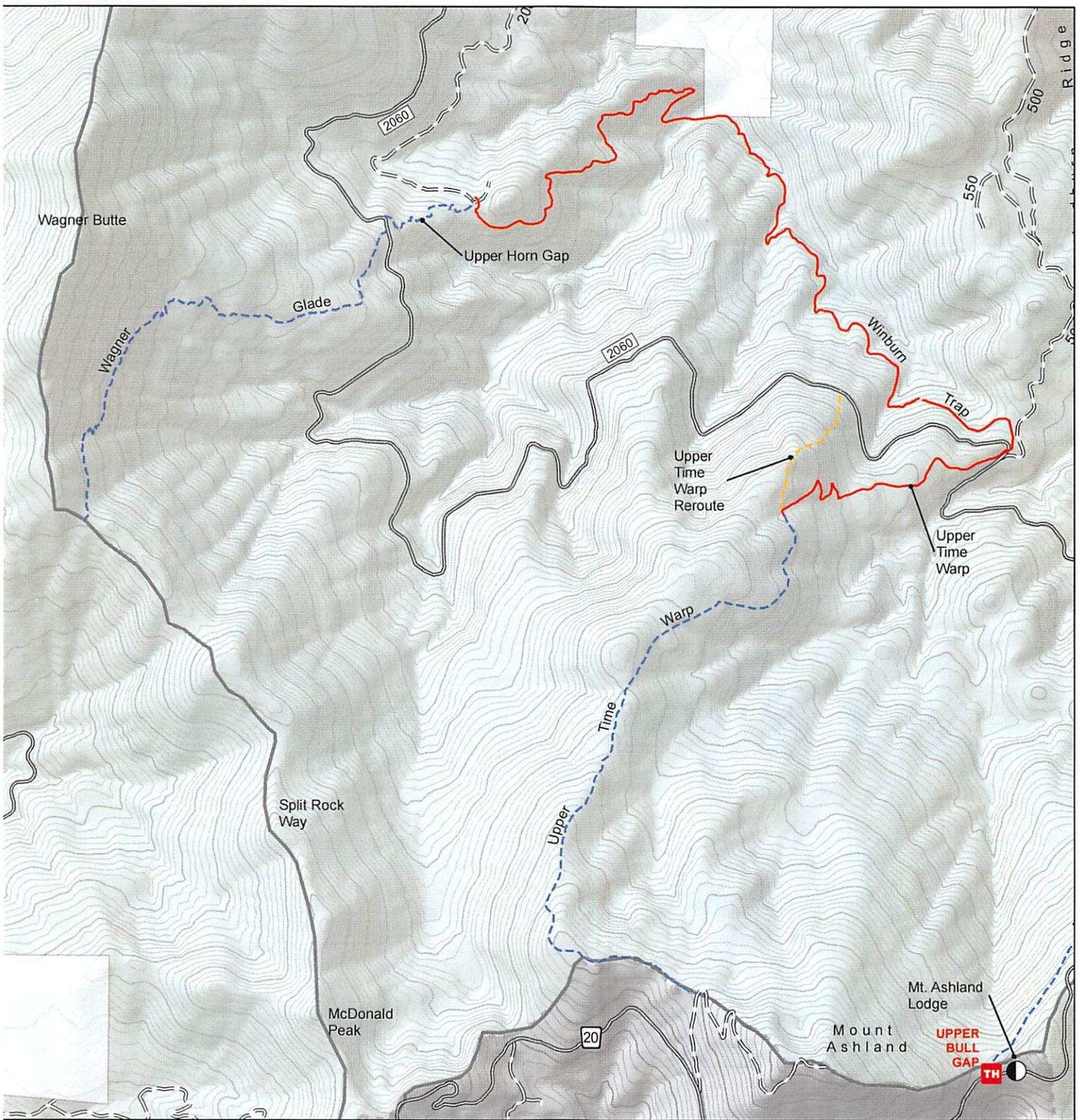
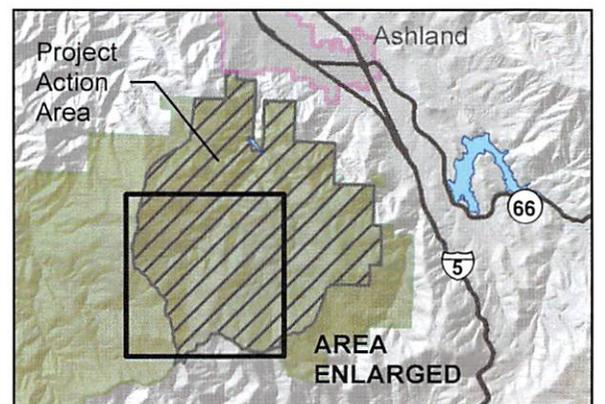
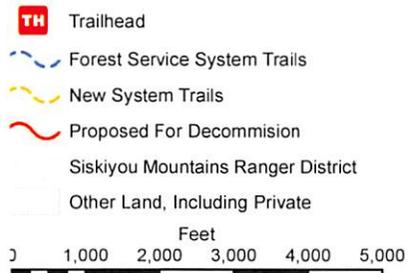


Figure 5. Trail Detail
Modified Alternative 3
Upper Westside



CONSTRUCTION SPECIFICS

The Split Rock trail will essentially remain in its current condition and it will be designated as a Class 1 Trail. Any maintenance that occurs on the Split Rock trail will follow the specifications for a Class 1 Trail in the *Trails Management Handbook*, Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 2309.18. All the other trails in the Ashland Trails Project, including new trails and reroutes, will be constructed and maintained in accordance with specifications for Class 2 Trails:

- **Tread Width.** Class 1 Trail tread width is 0 to 12 inches. For Class 2 Trails, recommended design tread widths for single-width trails range from 6 to 60 inches, depending on designed use and site specific conditions (e.g., slopes, proximity of precipices). The maximum width for the majority of trails is not predicted to be over 24 inches, but depending on sight, distances and terrain up to 48 inches may be needed.
- **Clearing Limit.** Class 1 Trail clearing height is 6 feet and clearing width is 24 inches, though some vegetation may encroach into the clearing area. For Class 2 Trails, recommended clearing heights range from 6 to 10 feet and clearing widths range from 24 to 72 inches, depending on designed use (larger widths and heights are generally provided to accommodate pack animals). The maximum clearing height and width will be 10 feet and 72 inches (6 feet), respectively.
- **Trail Target Grade.** Class 1 Trail target grade ranges from 5% to 25%. For Class 2 Trails, recommended target grades range from 5% to 20%, and the short pitch maximum ranges from 25% to 30%, depending on designed use. The trail target grade is assumed to be 10% and the short pitch maximum is assumed to be 25%.
- **Surface Material.** All proposed trails in the action area will be constructed of native surface materials (e.g., soil, rock, other naturally occurring materials).
- **Trail Slope Alignment.** Trail slope alignments less than 45 degrees will be avoided to the extent practicable. Additional erosion control structures (e.g., waterbars or check dams) may be required where trail slope alignment angles are less than 45 degrees.

RATIONALE FOR THE DECISION

I have decided to implement a modified version of Alternative 3 in this decision because the incorporated changes better meet the project's purpose and need. This decision is based on my review of the analysis presented in the Ashland Trails Project EA, comments received during scoping, comments received during the comment period that lasted from December 29, 2014 to February 6, 2015, and from input that was gathered at a public meeting held in Ashland on January 8, 2015.

Changes to managed uses in Modified Alternative 3 were made for a variety of reasons specific to each trail segment as described below:

Wagner Glade trail - because the Wagner Butte trail and the Split Rock trail are not open to bicycles or equestrians, the Wagner Glade trail will only be open to hikers/pedestrians.

Split Rock trail - will be managed as a Class 1 Trail and will be open to hikers and pedestrians, and closed to equestrians and bicycles. For the most part, the Split Rock trail will remain in its current state being indistinct, unimproved, with fallen logs and other obstacles, and generally difficult to follow. Two short segments (measuring approximately 100 yards and 300 yards) will be clearly routed and improved to avoid Howell's tauschia, a globally rare plant that is vulnerable to recreation impacts along the ridge. As a Class 1 Trail, the Split Rock trail will resemble more of a "route" or a "way" than an actual trail, providing a semi-cross-country rugged experience for those seeking a more natural environment than is likely to be found on other system trails.

Caterpillar trail - bicycle use is eliminated on the Caterpillar trail from the junction with the Lizard trail, to the junction with Forest Road 2060. This modification will provide equestrian users a route void of bicycles, as was requested in the comments to the draft EA and from comments received during the public meeting.

Alice in Wonderland trail - the 0.2 mile reroute will remain open to all non-motorized uses (hiker/pedestrian, equestrian and bicycles), consistent with use on the rest of the Alice in Wonderland trail.

Jabberwocky, Upper and Lower Missing Links trails - will be managed for bicycle use and not recommended for hiker/pedestrian users due to limited site distances, and in order to reduce potential user conflicts.

Wonder trail - will be designated as a one-way directional trail (uphill), open to all non-motorized uses (hiker/pedestrian, equestrian and bicycles) to the junction with the Not Stirred and Fell on Knee trails to reduce the potential for user conflict from downhill use.

Lastly, the Not Stirred trail will be open to equestrians to provide a connecting route for equestrians from the Wonder trail to Road 2060-300.

In selecting and modifying Alternative 3, I have carefully reviewed disclosures in Chapter 3 of the EA. The analysis discloses predicted environmental consequences of the actions, including effects to water resources, wildlife and wildlife habitat, soils and geology, aquatic species, botanical resources, non-native invasive plants, Inventoried Roadless Areas, cultural resources and fire risk. My conclusions are based on a review of the entire project record.

MODIFIED ALTERNATIVE 3 RESPONSE TO THE PURPOSE AND NEED

The need for this project is to provide a sustainable non-motorized trail system in the vicinity of Ashland commensurate with current public demand, and consistent with natural resource management responsibilities and Forest Service capabilities, that reduces user conflict through trail design, use designation, and management. The purpose of the action is to provide an adequate and sustainable trail system that minimizes impacts to soil, water, cultural, vegetation, and wildlife resources and discourages unauthorized trail proliferation.

The following considers how well Modified Alternative 3 addresses each of the following four recreation-related elements of the purpose and need statement for the proposed action.

- To provide a sustainable non-motorized trail system. This relates to the proposed design and maintenance of the trail system.
- To provide a trail system commensurate with public demand. This relates to current use levels and locations.
- To reduce user conflict. This relates to user conflict and how conflicts may change under Modified Alternative 3.
- To reduce unapproved trail proliferation. This relates to the past, ongoing, and anticipated future proliferation of unapproved trail construction in the action area under Modified Alternative 3.

Provide a Sustainable Non-Motorized Trail System

Modified Alternative 3 will address this element of the purpose and need statement through decommissioning 9.9 miles of existing historic and existing unapproved, poorly designed and unmaintained trails; incorporating existing historic and existing unapproved trails into the approved Forest Service trail system to allow for additional authorized trails and needed maintenance; and by designing all newly proposed and existing trails to standards that allow them to be sustainably managed over time.

Provide a Trail System Commensurate with Current Public Demand

One measure of the ability of a trail system to meet public demand is total trail miles. Currently, there is 15.8 miles of System Trails in the action area. Modified Alternative 3 will add an additional 24.9 miles of trails, for a total of 40.7 miles of System Trails in the action area. This more than doubles the current trail system and will meet the estimated ongoing and future public demand.

Reduce User Conflict

Modified Alternative 3 will spread users over a greater geographic area than the current System Trails, thereby lessening trail use density and contact with other users, and will limit allowed uses on some trails to reduce the potential for user conflict. Trails will also be signed with uses that are excluded, and all multi-use trails will be signed with trail etiquette guidelines to reduce user conflict.

Reduce Unapproved Trail Proliferation

Proper trail design and use designation will lessen the likelihood of new construction and will simplify enforcement efforts within the action area. The addition of 24.9 miles of new System Trails under Modified Alternative 3, and the separation of managed uses in high use areas, will better meet public demand and improve recreational experiences, which will also lessen the probability of trail proliferation. Although none of the alternatives would eliminate the potential for unapproved trail construction, modified Alternative 3 addresses the root causes - over use and user conflicts - that drive the creation of many non-System trails.

MODIFIED ALTERNATIVE 3 RESPONDING TO THE RELEVANT ISSUES

Issues and concerns were raised by the public and Interdisciplinary Team members during the development of this project. In response, the EA (Section 1.8.1, page 1-17) identified four relevant issues: 1) *potential effects on water quality due to erosion and sediment delivery*, 2) *potential effects on late-successional reserves (LSR)*, 3) *potential effects to northern spotted owls and their habitat*, and 4) *potential effects on Pacific fisher and their habitat*.

The following further describes my rationale for selecting Modified Alternative 3, and the response of my decision to these issues, based on my weighing of the pros and cons of each alternative considered in detail. My decision is based on components that were analyzed in the EA, primarily those associated with Alternative 3. My decision modifies the extent of consequences predicted for Alternative 3. The overall effect of my decision to select and implement a Modified Alternative 3 will result in effects that are equal to or less than those described for Alternative 3 in the EA.

Relevant Issue 1: Potential effects on water quality due to erosion and sediment delivery

Detailed discussions about this relevant issue can be found in EA Section 3.3.1, pages 3-16 to 3-38.

New trail construction under Modified Alternative 3 will require eight new stream crossings (5 fewer than the Alternative 2 and the same as Alternative 3), all of which will occur over intermittent streams. Trail decommissioning under this modified alternative will remove 12 crossings (including four on perennial streams), which will be seven more than Alternative 2 and the same as Alternative 3 and will result in a net decrease of four stream crossings in the action area. All new and previously unapproved stream crossings added to the system under Modified Alternative 3 will be designed to reduce sediment discharge potential, which could reduce load allocations to streams compared to Alternative 1.

The results of the Water Erosion Prediction Project (WEPP) model predicted a net decrease in annual sediment delivery of 12% under Modified Alternative 3 compared to Alternative 1. This decrease will move the Ashland watershed towards meeting the total maximum daily load (TMDL) target for reduced sediment loading, and will represent an improvement compared to both Alternative 1 and Alternative 2.

Similar to Alternative 3, Modified Alternative 3 will have only minor effects on water quality in the analysis area, including impacts to the City's domestic water source. In areas where previously unapproved trails cross streams, water quality conditions may improve slightly because these crossing will be designed and maintained in accordance with Forest Service guidelines. As a result, the effects of Modified Alternative 3 on the quality of the City's domestic water source will be minimal, and may be slightly reduced compared to Alternatives 1 and 2 (because the number of perennial stream crossings will be reduced).

Relevant Issue 2: Potential effects on late-successional reserves (LSR)

Detailed discussions about this relevant issue can be found in EA Section 3.3.2, pages 3-39 to 3-52.

Modified Alternative 3 will result in authorization of 24.9 miles of new System Trails, including 9.2 miles of existing unapproved trails, 8.3 miles of existing historic trails, and 7.4 miles of newly constructed trails, and will decommission 9.9 miles of existing unsustainable or undesirable trails in the action area. Many of the existing unapproved trails and portions of those proposed for new construction (e.g., Shaken) exist as old logging roads or fire lines. These trails account for approximately 12.5 acres (6 foot trail clearance) of existing habitat already modified within the LSR to some degree. New trail construction, in large part intended to re-route existing unapproved or historic trails to minimize resource damage (e.g., Upper Time Warp, Red Queen, Jabberwocky, Alice in Wonderland), will impact approximately 5.4 acres. Trail decommissioning will impact 7.2 acres. In total, Modified Alternative 3 will result in a net decrease of 1.8 acres of long-term habitat modification.

Trail densities under Modified Alternative 3 will be range from 0.04 to 1.5 miles per square mile within the five affected watersheds.

Minimal vegetation removal will be required for new trail construction (limited to 6 foot clearance width), and large down wood greater than 6 inches diameter-at-breast height (dbh) will be avoided during trail layout and construction where possible (although, over time, trail maintenance may require that sections of fallen trees be removed from the width of the trail tread and placed to the side of the trail). The impact of habitats modified by trail construction will most directly affect late-successional habitat-related small mammals, birds, and invertebrates associated with understory vegetation and the forest floor. As described in the analysis of effects for Alternative 3, the total amount of trail clearance under Modified Alternative 3 will occur within less than 0.1% of the entire northern portion of the LSR.

Modified Alternative 3 will include the existing 543 acres of disturbance associated with exiting unapproved and historic trails in the action area. New trail construction will result in an additional 76 acres of disturbance, although the effects of this disturbance will be reduced during trail decommissioning activities (which will affect 235 acres). In total, Modified Alternative 3 will result in 384 acres of long-term disturbance (or approximately 7% of late-successional and large mid-successional habitat within the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest portion of the LSR and less than 4% of the late-successional habitat in the entire LSR). This disturbance will be less than the 711 acres of disturbance associate with Alternative 1, 784 acres of disturbance under Alternative 2 and 552 acres of disturbance under Alternative 3.

Modified Alternative 3 addresses existing resource damage and disturbance to late-successional species by re-routing trails to locations with less or no impact, and rehabilitating or closing problem trail segments. The mileage of trails that will be decommissioned under this alternative will reduce the overall amount of disturbance within the LSR when compared to Alternatives 1, 2 and 3. For these reasons, the effects of Modified Alternative 3 are expected to be neutral to LSR values.

Relevant Issue 3: Potential effects on northern spotted owls and their habitat

Detailed discussions about this relevant issue can be found in EA Section 3.3.3, pages 3-52 to 3-69.

Modified Alternative 3 will result in minimal direct impacts to northern spotted owl habitat. The Winburn Trap trail will not be authorized for recreational use under this alternative, which will remove ongoing disturbance to known owl nest sites in the vicinity and reduce impacts to spotted owls compared to Alternatives 1 and 2.

As with Alternative 3, considering trail decommissioning, there will be no net increase in trail mileage from new construction or authorization of existing trails within any owl home ranges under Modified Alternative 3. Decommissioning of the Winburn Trap trail will occur within the Lightning Strike and Ski core areas. Authorization of the historic Wagner Glade trail will include 0.3 miles in the Lightning Strike core area. The 0.5 mile of new construction in the Ski core area will be associated with the proposed reroute of a 0.4 mile portion of the historic Upper Time Warp trail to be decommissioned in the Ski nest patch. Existing nesting, roosting, and foraging (NRF) and dispersal habitat that overlaps new trail construction will be maintained.

Modified Alternative 3 will remove potential disturbance within the nest patches of all known owl sites and result in no net increase in disturbance within core areas, except for a very small amount within the Lightning Strike core area. At the home range scale, the mileage and acreage of trails to be decommissioned under Modified Alternative 3 will result in a reduction in disturbance for all affected owl sites. As a result, the direct and indirect effects of Modified Alternative 3 on spotted owls and their prey will be neutral and potentially beneficial, with an overall reduction in the amount of habitat disturbance from recreational use.

Because the effects of Modified Alternative 3 are similar or slightly less than Alternative 3 through the reduction of overall trail mileage, it is anticipated that Modified Alternative 3 “may affect and is not likely to adversely affect” northern spotted owls because habitat will be maintained by new trail construction and there will be no net gain (and in some cases a reduction in disturbance acres) for all spotted owl home ranges, core areas and nest patches. This finding is consistent with the Letter of Concurrence (LOC) provided by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for the proposed action.

Relevant Issue 4: Potential effects on Pacific fisher and their habitat

Detailed discussions about this relevant issue can be found in EA Section 3.3.4, pages 3-69 to 3-78.

Trail clearance under Modified Alternative 3 will involve approximately 4.1 acres of denning/resting habitat and 8.1 acres of foraging/dispersal habitat for fishers within the action area. New trail construction and the incorporation of existing historic and unapproved trails as System Trails under this alternative will require very little vegetation change and large snags, large woody debris or trees with large mistletoe brooms will not be removed. New trail construction will affect less denning/resting habitat and 1.5 acres more foraging/dispersal habitat than will be recovered by trail decommissioning. This will represent less than 0.1% of these habitats available in the LSR.

Approximately 383 acres of denning/resting habitat and 239 acres of foraging/dispersal habitat are within the 100 meter disturbance buffer of existing historic and unapproved trails that will be authorized as System Trails under this alternative. In fact, decommissioning will reduce the overall amount of disturbance from existing historic and unapproved trails to 318 acres. However, there will

be a 67 acre net gain in disturbance of foraging and dispersal habitat due to new trail construction, which may result in avoidance of this habitat by fishers when recreational use is high. This increase represents approximately 0.1% of foraging/dispersal habitat within the LSR.

Some trails proposed for construction under Alternative 2 that would be located within known fisher home ranges were removed from Alternative 3 and Modified Alternative 3. This and the additional trails to be decommissioned will result in a reduction in the amount of denning/resting habitat disturbed. Overall, when compared to Alternatives 1, 2 and 3, Modified Alternative 3 will result in a considerable reduction in disturbance acres to Pacific fisher habitats.

The additional 67 acres of disturbance in foraging/dispersal habitat from new trail construction may result in localized effects on fishers, although, overall, Modified Alternative 3 will result in a reduction in habitat disturbance compared to Alternatives 1, 2 and 3. Therefore, as with Alternative 3, Modified Alternative 3 “may impact individuals or habitat, but will not likely contribute to a trend towards Federal listing or cause a loss of viability to the local population (Siskiyou Mountains) or species” for Pacific fisher.

OTHER ISSUES CONSIDERED

Other issues not described in detail in this decision but which were considered in my analysis included:

- Potential effects on Forest Service sensitive species, management indicator species, Northwest Forest Plan (NWFP) survey and manage species, migratory birds, and other sensitive terrestrial species.
- Potential effects on soils
- Potential effects on geologic slope stability
- Potential effects on streams and wetlands
- Attainment of Aquatic Conservation Strategy Objectives
- Potential effects on aquatic species and habitats
- Potential effects on public recreational fishery access
- Potential effects on the McDonald Peak Botanical Area
- Potential effects on federally-listed, Forest Service sensitive, NWFP Survey and Manage Species, or locally rare species of vascular plants, bryophytes, lichens, or fungi
- Introduction of non-native invasive plant species
- Potential effects on the McDonald Peak IRA or potential wilderness areas
- Potential effects on cultural resources and/or American Indian access and use
- Increased risk of fire

Detailed discussions about these other issues can be found in the EA, Section 3.4, pages 3-79 to 3-177. The overall effect of my decision to select and implement a Modified Alternative 3 will result in effects that are equal to or less than those described for Alternative 3 in the EA.

RESOURCE PROTECTION MEASURES, MONITORING, AND ENFORCEMENT

In order to minimize potential resource impacts from project activities, project design criteria (PDC) have been incorporated into the selected alternative. Project design criteria are devised in the pre-analysis and analysis phases to reduce environmental impacts and comply with applicable laws and regulations. They include, but are not limited to; best management practices (BMPs), standards and guidelines (S&Gs) and standard operating procedures (SOPs).

Use of the trails will be monitored to determine if they are meeting the objectives of Modified Alternative 3. Monitoring activities will include annual field visits by Forest Service recreation specialists and resource specialists to determine if user conflicts are occurring or if resource impacts are occurring to soils, water resources, vegetation, wildlife, or other sensitive resources, and to determine if new unauthorized trails are being constructed. If necessary, administrative changes may be made to the trail system or designated managed uses on trails to reduce user conflict or to improve the recreational experience.

Under all alternatives, the Forest Service will continue to enforce managed uses within the action area consistent with the Rogue River Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP), implementing regulations, and other guidance. The following Closure Orders specifically apply to recreation uses within the action area. The enforcement of these closure orders is generally reflected as PDC GEN-12 in Table 4 below.

- Order No. RSF-101 – Use of Vehicles Off National Forest System Roads – Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest. This order prohibits use of vehicles, including non-motorized vehicles, off Forest Development Roads within the Ashland Watershed, as well as use of motorized vehicles on Forest Development Roads and segments within the Ashland Watershed when the road or segment is posted closed to such vehicles. This order includes an exemption to allow bicycle use on Forest Service trails posted open to bicycle use.
- Order No. RRF-002 – Fire and Occupancy and Use. This order prohibits building, maintaining, attending or using a fire, campfire, or stove fire in the Ashland watershed and general vicinity. It also prohibits camping in the Ashland watershed and general vicinity.

Table 4 illustrates the PDC and mitigation measures that are incorporated into Modified Alternative 3.

Table 4- Project Design Criteria and Mitigation Measures

<i>No.</i>	<i>Project Design Criteria and Mitigation Measures</i>
General	
GEN-1	The exact location of the trail may be refined in the field to accommodate topography, soils, available materials, degree of trail difficulty, and to avoid sensitive areas, such as seeps, springs, and sensitive plant and wildlife species.
GEN-2	All trails will be constructed to minimize erosion, avoid natural water courses, and avoid sensitive riparian areas and plants to the extent possible.
GEN-3	All trails will be designed to minimize sustained steep pitches, grade reversals, and to reduce the chance for water to gain enough speed to recruit and encourage erosion. Rock needed for trail stabilization, sediment traps, and erosion control will be from on-site sources.
GEN-4	Forest clearing in the proposed trail corridors will be reduced to the extent practical through careful trail design and layout.
GEN-5	All trails will be laid out to avoid removal of trees with a diameter-at-breast height (dbh) greater than 6 inches. Coarse woody debris greater than 6 inches dbh will not be moved, but will have the portion on the trail tread cut to the width of the tread and placed to the side of the trail.
GEN-6	Trail tread will be cleared of all organic material down to mineral soil. When practical, all removed vegetation will be used to revegetate off-trail disturbed areas.
GEN-7	Perennial waters will be avoided or spanned by bridges or similar man-made features, where necessary, based on the width of the crossing, use level, type of use, and stream flow. Bridges, if necessary, will be built using a combination of treated and untreated wood or steel and composite materials. Any use of treated wood will be in accordance with Western Wood Preserves Institute <i>Best Management Practices for the Use of Treated Wood in Aquatic and Wetland Environments</i> (WWPI 2011).
GEN-8	Intermittent waters will be crossed by hard fords as necessary.
GEN-9	Revegetation, where applicable, may include topsoil replacement, planting, and seeding, and will occur in accordance with Forest Service botanist prescriptions.
GEN-10	All trails will be signed with uses that are excluded, and all multiuse trails will be signed with trail etiquette guidelines to reduce user conflict.
GEN-11	All trails, with the exception of Split Rock Way, will be designed to Trail Class 2 standards, as provided in as provided in the <i>Trails Management Handbook</i> (FSH 2309.18).
GEN-12	Trail use will be monitored to determine if it is consistent with the managed uses identified for each trail. Closure orders, including user restrictions, may be issued and enforced by Forest Service law enforcement officers if it is determined managed uses are not being adhered to.

Ashland Trails Project DN and FONSI

<i>No.</i>	<i>Project Design Criteria and Mitigation Measures</i>
Water Quality	
WQ-1	Stream crossing approaches on both new and reconstructed trails will be designed to minimize sedimentation by reducing diversion potential; avoiding deeply incised streams with steep side slopes; using native rock sources to armor approaches on soils with a high erosion rating; and avoiding long approaches that allow water to concentrate, erode trail tread and deliver fine sediment.
WQ-2	All trail stream crossings will meet the following to the extent practicable: (1) contain little to no fine fill material; (2) provide for unrestricted stream flows; and (2) avoid stream capture. Stream crossings that must use conveyance structures, such as culverts, will be inspected yearly and maintained when needed.
WQ-3	Legacy sediment sources, such as gullies, head cuts, and fill material in stream crossings, that are associated with existing historic or unapproved trails in the action area will have stabilization techniques applied during trail reconstruction or decommissioning. If trails are re-routed to avoid these areas, stabilization techniques will be applied during the decommissioning process. Example of stabilization techniques include water bars, check dams, waddles, fill and culvert removal, and planting and seeding.
WQ-4	Existing historic and unapproved trail segments proposed for decommissioning will be recontoured where needed to eliminate erosion. All fill will be removed from channels and stream banks will be recontoured to mimic the upstream and downstream banks to the extent possible. Adjacent duff or litter will be moved to cover trail tread and the trail will be obscured by placing branches and small diameter course wood.
WQ-5	During trail maintenance, reconstruction, and decommissioning, all displaced soil or fill materials will be placed in locations where they are unlikely to be discharged to streams, to the extent practicable.
WQ-6	Signs will be installed at the White Rabbit and Four Corners trailheads providing guidance to trail users on the proper disposal of pet and human waste. The signs will indicate that all waste must either be removed using a disposal waste bag, or buried. In all cases, buried waste must be located at least 200 feet from any waterbody and buried at least 6 inches deep.
WQ-7	All gas powered equipment used for trail construction, re-construction, and maintenance will be refueled at least 150 feet from all watercourses (intermittent and perennial).
WQ-8	Trail conditions will be monitored in the wet months for excessive rutting, erosion, or sediment delivery to streams. As necessary, additional erosion control devices may be employed locally to address these conditions, and/or the trail may be closed seasonally to mitigate short-term impacts.
Soils and Slope Stability	
GEO-1	<p>Additional consultation by a geologist or soil scientist will be completed during trail design and layout when any of the following landscape characteristics are found in the vicinity of a proposed alignment. Field review will be used to inform adjustments to segment locations to avoid potentially high risk slope failure areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>Slope aspect</u>. Northerly and easterly aspects that tend to hold more water on site longer and have developed deeper soil / decomposed granitics layers.

Ashland Trails Project DN and FONSI

No.	<i>Project Design Criteria and Mitigation Measures</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>Slope shape</u>. Concave slopes that concentrate surface and ground water, and/or are characterized by deeper soil / decomposed granitics layers. ▪ <u>Position of trail on the slope</u>. Trail locations at or near obvious changes in slope gradient (which are typically inherently less stable). Trails on lower slope positions where there is potential for higher ground water flows. ▪ <u>Slope gradient</u>. Trails being proposed on slopes of 75% or greater, or trails on slopes between approximately 50% and 75%. ▪ <u>Slope complexity</u>. Simple slope complexity (smooth linear or curvilinear slopes) that have no complex topography to slow and catch soil movement, such that a failure would flow directly to stream channels. ▪ <u>Stream/draw crossings</u>. Multiple crossings of individual drainages. ▪ <u>Trail concentration</u>. Multiple trail segments on an individual slope.
Aquatic Resources	
AQ-1	A fisheries specialist will be consulted prior to constructing any stream crossings on fish-bearing streams.
Botanical Resources and Invasive Plants	
BOT-2	The Split Rock Trail in the McDonald Peak vicinity will be located to avoid the known population of Howell's tauschia.
BOT-5	The Forest Service will periodically monitor the first ½ mile of the Upper Time Warp trail from its start point on the crest to make sure recreational users trying to avoid lingering snowfields on the trail do not create braided routes and/or unduly disturb populations of Henderson's horkelia or Mt. Ashland lupine (<i>Lupinus aridus</i> ssp. <i>ashlandensis</i>). Preventive measures, such as an early season closure or awareness signs, will be considered if warranted.
BOT-7	Two clustered ladyslipper orchid occurrences will be flagged for avoidance prior to decommissioning activities along the Reservoir Trail to ensure they are not trampled or otherwise damaged by construction activities.
BOT-8	The patch of three-toothed horkelia (<i>Horkelia tridentate</i>) on the section of the Winburn Trap Trail proposed for decommissioning will be marked for avoidance prior to decommissioning activities to ensure it is not trampled or otherwise damaged by construction activities.
BOT-9	The three-toothed horkelia population occupying the old spur road in the SE ¼ of the NE ¼ of section 28 will be protected to extent practical by narrowing and confining the trend width, so that trail edge plants can survive when the old roadbed, currently unused, becomes part of Lower Marty's Trail.
BOT-10	All proposed new trails not specifically mentioned above and authorized for construction will be surveyed for Forest Service Sensitive and NWFP Survey and Manage vascular plants and bryophytes once routes are flagged but before trail construction begins. If Forest Service Sensitive or Survey and Manage species, or other species of local concern, are found, trails will be re-flagged/re-routed to the extent necessary to avoid impacting the viability of local populations.

Ashland Trails Project DN and FONSI

<i>No.</i>	<i>Project Design Criteria and Mitigation Measures</i>
BOT-11	New trails will be re-routed, where practical, prior to construction if invasive plants are found to be in the path of proposed new trails and there is concern that trail construction and trail use will lead to spread or expansion of the invasive plant population.
BOT-12	If new trails must be constructed through known invasive plant sites, or if ground-disturbing trail decommissioning or restoration activities must occur in infested areas, workers will be required to clean tools, clothing, and equipment, before moving beyond the infested area.
BOT-13	Before beginning construction of any new trails, workers will be required to check tools, clothing, and equipment for soil or seeds of invasive plants, and clean these items off-Forest or at roadside if contaminated.
Cultural Resources	
CUL-1	A qualified cultural resource specialist will review any changes in the design and location of trail reroutes that may become necessary during implementation due to unforeseen circumstances prior to construction.
CUL-2	A qualified cultural resources specialist will monitor construction of all trail segments where significant cultural resources are known to the vicinity.
CUL-3	If cultural materials are discovered during ground-disturbing activities, all work in that area will stop and the Forest Archaeologist will be contacted to determine the appropriate course of action. The proposed work may not resume in that area until the Forest Archaeologist determines that the activity will not cause an adverse effect to significant cultural resources.

OTHER ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

In addition to Alternative 3 – Preferred Alternative, two alternatives (Alternative 1 – No Action and Alternative 2 – Proposed Action) were considered in the environmental assessment. Two additional alternatives were considered but eliminated from detailed study because they did not meet the purpose and need and were not feasible to implement (EA, CH. 2.6 pgs. 2-34 to 2-36). The alternatives described below were analyzed in detail.

Alternative 1- No Action (EA, Ch. 2.3.1 pg. 2-10 to 2-11)

Alternative 1 (No Action) provides a baseline from which to analyze the effects of the action alternatives. Under Alternative 1, the Forest Service would continue to manage System Trails in the action area in accordance with current management plans and FSH 2309.18. No new trails would be constructed, and existing historic and unapproved trails would not be incorporated as System Trails. The Forest Service would also continue to discourage use and proliferation of unapproved trails through monitoring and enforcement of managed uses within the action area. However, because it is uncertain how many of existing historic or existing unapproved trails could effectively be removed in the short term, and in consideration of the numerous unsuccessful attempts by the Forest Service to close these trails, the EA conservatively assumed that no trails would be removed or decommissioned under Alternative 1, and that impacts associated with their continued use would continue.

In total, 15.8 miles of System Trails and 25.6 miles of existing historic and unapproved trails would remain in the action area under Alternative 1.

Due to resource impacts associated with soils, water quality, and wildlife, this alternative does not meet the purpose of the proposed action to provide an adequate and sustainable trail system that minimizes impacts to soil, water, cultural, vegetation, and wildlife resources and discourages unauthorized trail proliferation.

Alternative 2- Proposed Action (EA, Ch. 2.32 pg. 2-11 to 2-12)

Alternative 2 reflects the trail design proposed by the Forest Service during public scoping. This alternative was designed to meet the purpose and need of the proposed action, and reflects many of the aspects of the Trails Master Plan submitted by AWTA in 2011.

Approximately 31.4¹ miles of trails would be incorporated into the approved trail network in the action area under this alternative, including about 22.0 miles of existing historic and unapproved trails and 9.4 miles of new proposed trails. A total of 5.2 miles of existing historic and unapproved trails would be decommissioned under this alternative.

I have decided not to select Alternative 2 due to impacts to LSRs (net increase of 73 acres of disturbance), northern spotted owls and their habitat (associated with the Windburn Trap and Upper Time Warp trails), impacts to Pacific fisher and their habitat (associated with the Rip 1, Freak Went

¹ Mileage total reflects an additional .5 mile of the proposed Jabberwocky reroute which was inadvertently not included in the Alternative 2 total mileage in the EA.

Flyer, Not Stirred and Shaken trails), and potential water quality concerns (associated with the Windburn Trap trail).

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

In June 2012, the Forest Service published a legal notice notifying the public of the opportunity to comment on the Ashland Trails Project. The public scoping period opened on June 13, 2012 and closed on July 27, 2012. Letters were sent out to agencies and interested groups and citizens explaining the background, purpose and need, and preliminary details and design features of the proposed action, and requesting comments, concerns or issues specific to the Ashland Trails Project be provided to the Forest Service.

Thirty-two comment letters were received during the scoping period. A copy of the Scoping Report, which summarizes the comments received during the scoping period, is provided as Appendix A of the EA.

Copies of the December 2014 Ashland Trails Project Environmental Assessment (EA) and Appendices, along with an invitation to comment, were mailed to those individuals and organizations involved with the proposed action or who had requested a copy of the EA. Legal Notices were published in the Medford Mail Tribune on December 29, 2014 and January 7, 2015. The notices established a comment period under 36 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 215. The comment period began on December 29, 2014 and ended February 6, 2015, a period of 38 days. During the comment period, the Forest Service received 119 comment letters. Comments were provided on various topics, some expressed concern while others provided support or recommendations. Responses to substantive comments are included as an attachment to this DN and FONSI. All comments submitted during the planning process have been considered.

On January 8, 2015 an open house style meeting was held at the Ashland Public Library with Forest Service resource specialists on hand to answer questions about the project from the public. Over 160 individuals attended the meeting.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

I have reviewed the EA and associated documents and believe there is adequate information within the project record to provide a reasoned choice of action. Implementing the selected alternative with the specified management requirements, constraints, and mitigation measures will cause no unacceptable cumulative impacts to any resource.

After considering the environmental effects described in the EA (EA pg. 3-1 to 3-177), I have determined that these actions will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment considering the context and intensity of impacts (40 CFR 1508.27); therefore, an environmental impact statement is not needed. I base my finding on the following:

1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse are discussed in the EA (EA Ch. 3 pg. 3-1 to 3-177). These impacts are within the range of the Forest Plan and will not have significant impacts on resources identified and described in Chapter 3 of the EA. The selected

alternative (Modified Alternative 3) provides the best combination of physical, biological, social and economic benefits.

2. There will be no significant effects on public health and safety. There may be a need to temporarily close a section of an existing trail during new trail construction, but it is not anticipated to impact public safety.
3. There will be no significant impacts to unique characteristics of geographic areas such as cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, old growth forest, range land, research natural areas, experimental forests, inventoried roadless areas or other ecologically critical areas (EA pg. 1-13, 3-164 to 3-168, 3-177 to 3-183).
4. Based on public participation and analysis in the EA, the effects on the quality of the human environment are not likely to be highly controversial (EA Ch. 3 pg. 3-1 to 3-15). There is no known credible scientific controversy over the impacts of the project. Although there are sometimes competing interests surrounding recreation, the conclusions of effects were not shown to have any scientific controversy.
5. There are no known effects on the human environment that are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks associated with this project. Trail construction is common practice and the effects are well known. The EA effectively addresses and analyzes the environmental impacts associated with the project and incorporates well-established best management practices to minimize negative impacts (EA Ch. 2 pg. 2-30 to 2-33).
6. These actions pose no disproportionately high or adverse human health or environmental effects, including social and economic effects, on minority or low-income populations (FONSI Element 2). This project has shared the Federal government's overall trust responsibility to Indian tribes where treaty or other legally defined rights pally to National Forest System lands. Consultation with the Confederate Tribes of the Siletz Indians of Oregon, the Confederated Tribes of the Grande Ronde Community of Oregon and the Quartz Valley Indian Reservation has occurred. Consultation has incorporated opportunities for tribal comments and contributions to the proposed project (EA Ch. 3 pg. 3-173).
7. This action is not likely to establish a precedent for future actions that may be implemented to meet the goals and objectives of the Rogue River National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan and the Klamath National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan. This project is consistent with management direction set forth by the Forest Plans (EA Ch. 1 pg. 1-11 to 1-13).
8. There are no known significant adverse, cumulative, or secondary effects between this project and other projects (completed, active, or planned). Effects to the basic resource values of soil, water, fish, plants, and wildlife are estimated and determined to be localized, limited, or small in scale (EA Ch. 3 pg. 3-15 to 3-164). This determination is based on the results of cumulative effects analysis discussed in the EA.
9. Based on the cultural resource inventory and report, there will be no effect on historic properties under the terms of the Programmatic Agreement between the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP), the Oregon State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and Region 6 of the Forest Service. All significant and unevaluated archaeological sites will be avoided under Alternative 3. PDC CUL-1 through CUL-3 will be implemented to reduce the

potential for impacts to both known resources and any new resources that may be discovered during construction.

10. The biological evaluation for plant species proposed, endangered, threatened or sensitive determines that through the implementation of PDC BOT- 5 through BOT-13, impacts to these species will be minimized and will not be likely to adversely affect the viability of the local or regional populations or the species as a whole (EA Ch. 3 pg. 3-149 to 3- 164, Biological Evaluation located in the project record).

A biological evaluation for wildlife species proposed, endangered, threatened or sensitive has been prepared and located in the project record. Analysis of wildlife species indicates that this project “may affect and is not likely to adversely affect” northern spotted owls or their critical habitat. For or Pacific Fisher, the project “may impact individuals or habitat, but will not likely contribute to a trend towards Federal listing or cause a loss of viability to the local population (Siskiyou Mountains) or species” (EA Ch. 3 pg. 3-52 to 3-78, Biological Evaluation located in the project record).

The proposed action is consistent with the LRMP, as amended by the 2001 Record of Decision for Amendments to the Survey and Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines in Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl (USDA and USDI 2001b), using the 2001 Survey and Manage species list and survey requirements described in the most recent survey protocols for each species (and reflecting modifications resulting from a 2011 Settlement Agreement) . Surveys were not triggered for any Survey and Manage vertebrate or non-vertebrate animal species by the proposed action, as documented in the Wildlife Biological Evaluation and Specialist Report for the proposed action. Management recommendations for the known sites of Chace sideband within the action area will be implemented to maintain suitable habitat (EA Ch. 3 pg. 3-79 to 3-112).

11. The actions described for this project in the EA do not threaten a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment. Applicable laws and regulations were considered in the EA (EA Ch. 1 pg. 1-4, 1-11 to 1-16) and this project is consistent with the Rogue River and Klamath National Forest Land and Resource Management Plans as amended.

There are no commitments of resources that cannot be regained such as the extinction of a species or the removal of mined ore. There are no irreversible commitments of resources. Irretrievable commitments are those that are lost for a period of time such as the temporary loss of timber productivity in forested areas that are kept clear for use as a power line right-of-way or road. The development and use of the trails and trailhead are considered irretrievable commitment of land to a non-vegetative state until such time that the path is abandoned and the disturbed sites are returned back to productive capacity.

This decision is made with consideration of past, present and reasonably foreseeable future actions on National Forest lands and other ownerships within potentially affected areas which could have a cumulatively significant effect on the quality of the human and natural environment.

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS AND POLICY

In reviewing the EA and actions associated with the modified version of Alternative 3, I have concluded that my decision is consistent with the following laws and requirements.

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

NEPA establishes the format and content requirements of environmental analysis and documentation as well as requirements for public involvement and disclosure. The entire process of preparing this EA was undertaken to comply with NEPA (EA Ch. 1 pg. 1-1).

The National Forest Management Act (NFMA)

I find this decision to be consistent with the long term management objectives as discussed in the Rogue River and Klamath National Forest Land and Resource Management Plans as amended. All other Forest Plan direction, including from the Northwest Forest Plan and the Recreational Opportunity Spectrum has been adhered to and incorporated into the project's design (EA Ch. 1 Pg. 1-4, 1-11 to 1-116).

The Preservation of American Antiquities Act of June 1906 and the National Historic Preservation Act: The Oregon State Historic State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO)

As noted in FONSI Element 9, a cultural resources inventory has been completed for the project area. Under the terms of the Programmatic Agreement between the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP), the Oregon State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and Region 6 of the Forest Service a determination was made of no effect on historic properties (EA Ch. 3 pg. 3-168 to 3-176).

The Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended

Biological Evaluations were prepared to document the possible effects of the proposed activities to threatened and endangered species within the project area. The selected alternative will not be likely to adversely affect the viability on proposed, endangered, threatened or sensitive plant species (EA Ch. 3 pg. 3-149 to 3-164, Biological Evaluation and NWFP Survey and Manage Report located in the project record). The project "may affect and is not likely to adversely affect" northern spotted owls or their critical habitat. For Pacific Fisher, the project "may impact individuals or habitat, but will not likely contribute to a trend towards Federal listing or cause a loss of viability to the local population (Siskiyou Mountains) or species" (EA Ch. 3 pg. 3-52 to 3-78, Biological Evaluation and Specialist Report located in the project record). There will be no effect on listed fish species, fish habitat or Region 6 Sensitive species (EA Ch. 3 pg. 3-142 to 3-147).

A Letter of Concurrence (Reference # 01EOFW00-2014-F-0032) from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was received by the Forest on February 18th, 2014 which "reflects the Service's finding that implementation of Alternative 3 of the Ashland Trails Project, as proposed by the Forest, is not likely to adversely affect the spotted owl or its critical habitat".

The Clean Water Act, 1982 and 303(d)

The selected alternative will comply with the Clean Water Act. In compliance with the Clean Water Act, the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality lists several streams within in the project area as water quality impaired streams (303)(d) list). Table 3-5 in Ch. 3 pg. 3-19 to 3-20 lists the waterbodies within or downstream of the analysis area and what pollutant the stream is listed for. Management direction regarding 303(d) listed streams is that any project activity should not further degrade the parameters for which it is listed (Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Protocol for addressing Clean Water Act Section 303(d) Waters).

I find that the selected alternative will not compromise the quality of water sources (EA Ch. 3 pg. 3-16 to 3-39).

The Clean Air Act

The selected alternative will comply with the Clean Air Act. The Act prescribes air quality to be regulated by each individual state. There are no smoke generating activities associated with the project (EA Ch. 3 pg. 3-178).

Civil Rights and Environmental Justice

Executive Order 12898 on environmental justice requires federal agencies to identify and address any disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on minority and low income populations. The analysis focuses on potential effects from the project to minority populations, disable persons, and low-income groups.

After evaluating the discussion in the EA Ch.3, pages 3-179 to 3-183, I have determined that there will no discernable impacts from any of the alternatives on Native Americans, women, other minorities, or the Civil Rights of any American citizen.

PRE-DECISIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW PROCESS

The Ashland Trails Project record is on file at the Siskiyou Mountains Ranger District, Star Ranger Station at 6941 Upper Applegate Road, Jacksonville, Oregon, 97530. This project was subject to pre-decisional administrative review pursuant to 36 CFR 218, Subpart B. Also called the “objection process” the pre-decisional review process replaced the appeal process (36 CFR 215) in March 2013. The primary difference with the objection process is that a person may object to a project prior to the final decision, whereas under the appeal process, appeals were made after the decision. The full text of the rule can be found here: <http://federal.eregulations.us/cfr/title36.part218>.

On November 2, 2015 a Legal Notice was published in the Medford Mail Tribune establishing a 45-day period for objections to the draft Decision Notice for the Ashland Trails Project under 36 CFR 218.7. The Legal Notice announced the availability of the draft Decision Notice and provided information on submitting objections. At this same time, the draft Decision Notice was distributed to individuals who had commented during the project scoping period and during the comment period on the EA. The objection process ended on December 18, 2015 and no objections were received. Prior

to signing this Decision Notice an additional waiting period of 5 business days was incorporated to accommodate for any objections that may have been sent by mail.

IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of this project is expected to begin in the winter of 2016 beginning with construction of lower elevation trails that are clear of snow.

CONTACT AND GENERAL INFORMATION

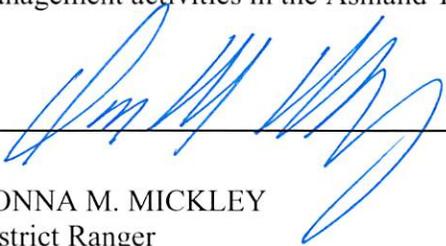
The Ashland Trails Project record is on file at the Siskiyou Mountains Ranger District office at 6941 Upper Applegate Road, Jacksonville, Oregon 97530. The EA and decision are also available on the Rogue River- Siskiyou National Forest webpage at: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=39748>

For additional information concerning the specific activities authorized with this decision you may contact:

Brian Long, Project Leader, Recreation
Siskiyou Mountains Ranger District
6941 Upper Applegate Road
Jacksonville, OR 97530
(541) 899-3815

RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL

The District Ranger of the Siskiyou Mountains Ranger District on the Rogue River- Siskiyou National Forest is the responsible official responsible for deciding the type and extent of management activities in the Ashland Trails Project area.



DONNA M. MICKLEY
District Ranger
Siskiyou Mountains Ranger District
Rogue River- Siskiyou National Forest

12-28-15

Date

For Further Information, Contact:

Brian Long

Siskiyou Mountains Ranger District

6941 Upper Applegate Road

Jacksonville, Oregon 97530

(541) 899-3815



for the greatest good

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Front Cover Photo: Sean Bagshaw