



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Wind River
Ranger District

Carson,
Washington 98610

Date: December 31, 1993

Dear Interested Citizen:

Enclosed is a copy of the DECISION NOTICE, FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT and ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT for the Silver Star Trails Project. The project area is located on the Wind River Ranger District, Gifford Pinchot National Forest.

For additional information, contact Fred Henschell at the above address, or by phone at, (509) 427-5645.

Thank you for your interest in the recreation program on the Wind River Ranger District.

Sincerely,

GREGORY L. COX
District Ranger

Enclosure



DECISION NOTICE
AND
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

SILVER STAR TRAILS PROJECT
CLARK and SKAMANIA COUNTIES, WASHINGTON

U.S.D.A. FOREST SERVICE
GIFFORD PINCHOT NATIONAL FOREST
WIND RIVER RANGER DISTRICT

An Environmental Assessment that discusses the Silver Star Trails Project on the Wind River Ranger District is available for public review at the Gifford Pinchot National Forest Headquarters Office in Vancouver, Washington, and at the Wind River Ranger District, Carson Washington. The project proposes to construct new trails, reconstruct and relocate existing trails, establish trailheads and manage Forest Service roads used for access.

The Silver Star Scenic Special Interest Area is located approximately 25 miles northeast of the Portland / Vancouver area, in the southwestern corner of the Gifford Pinchot National Forest.

Decision and Reason for the Decision

The Key Issues identified for this project were:

1. The effects of proposed management activities on the capability of providing "semi-primitive, non-motorized recreation" opportunities.
2. The effects of proposed management activities on the Silver Star Roadless Area. Portions of the Silver Star area have been identified and inventoried as a roadless area. This issue considers the effect of recreation development on the area's future potential for wilderness designation.
3. The effects of proposed management activities on recreation user conflicts. Joint use of the same area and trail system by different types of recreation users produces the potential for conflict.

Other issues considered were: protection of streams and riparian areas, botanical resources, management indicator species, proposed, endangered, threatened and sensitive species (PETS), cultural resources, and the effects of recreational use on risk of wildfire and fire control capability.

Based on the analysis described in the Environmental Assessment, it is my decision to adopt Alternative D. This alternative proposes to build new trails 172A, 180A and 180.2 which will add 7 miles to the trail system. Trail 172A connects with the proposed Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) trail at the National Forest Boundary. Construction of the segments of Trail 172A on the National Forest will be predicated upon a joint, firm commitment with DNR to ensure that the construction of the portions of the trail on State and Federal lands will occur simultaneously. Existing Trail 172, will be relocated and reconstructed to remove obstacles and hazards that make the trail impassible or dangerous to horse riders. Approximately 8.5 miles of old, existing roads that have been closed to motorized vehicles since the area was designated a Special Interest Area would be converted to trail. Two trailheads would be constructed.

Alternative D was chosen primarily for these reasons:

This alternative preserves the semi-primitive characteristics of the area and meets guidelines for semi-primitive, non-motorized recreation.

The unique characteristics of the inventoried roadless area are maintained. Road obliteration and conversion of roads to trails in adjacent parts of the Silver Star area may eventually increase the number of acres considered roadless. Installation of motor vehicle barriers along the Forest boundary will help eliminate un-authorized motorized vehicle use in the area.

This alternative provides: 6.6 miles of trail designated for Horse/Hiker/Mountain Bike use; 11.7 miles of trail designated for Horse/Hiker use; and 1 mile of trail designated for Hiker use. Two trailheads will be established; one will have facilities for horses. Existing Trail 172 will be relocated and reconstructed to make it safe and passable to horse riders.

This alternative does not propose trails near streams or riparian areas.

Sensitive plants or plant habitat will not be effected by new trails.

This alternative is consistent with the "Mediated Agreement" Supplement to the Final Environmental Impact Statement for managing competing and unwanted vegetation. The "prevention" strategy for managing vegetative competition was selected.

This alternative will not cause disturbance or loss of habitat to Proposed, Endangered, Threatened and Sensitive Species. The alternative is in compliance with the Northern Spotted Owl FEIS.

Management Indicator species or their habitat will not be adversely effected. Cultural Resource sites are avoided or protected. Closure of road 4100502 and conversion to trail will protect sites being damaged by motor vehicle use.

This alternative constructs trails that will contribute to the establishment of the Chinook Trail. The corridor for this long distance trail is identified in the Washington State Trails Plan, and the trail is part of the proposed statewide trails network.

Other Alternatives Considered:

Alternative A - No Action: This alternative would defer changes to management policy and the proposal of management activities. This alternative was not selected because deferring action does not meet the purpose of the project. Existing trails would not be improved. New trails and trailhead facilities would not be built. Negative impacts resulting from increasing recreation use with inadequate trail system and facilities would be likely.

Alternative B: This alternative proposes limited improvements to bring existing trails to design standards for designated use. This alternative was not selected because it does not provide facilities to meet user needs and reduce resource impacts. Proposed minimal improvement of trailheads would not provide for equestrian users. Negative impacts to cultural resource site on Road 4100502 would continue.

Alternative C: This alternative proposes construction of all trails listed in the "Trail Inventory and Plan"; Appendix D, Forest Plan. Six new trails would be constructed that would provide 13.7 miles of additional trail. This alternative was not selected because of possible resource concerns. Proposed Trail 172.1 would be built in or near the riparian area in the Rock Creek drainage, and there would be a loss of potential sensitive plant habitat. Proposed Trails 175.1 and 180.1 would be built in or near the riparian area of Star Creek. These trails could effect Larch Mountain Salamanders, Golden Eagles and potential habitat for peregrine falcons and sensitive plants.

Alternative E: This alternative does not propose construction of Trail 172A. This alternative was not selected because there would not be an opportunity to link with the DNR trail system and the existing DNR "Three Cornered Rock Trailhead". Construction of Trails 172.1, 175.1 and 180.1 would cause resource concerns similar to Alternative C.

Public Involvement

In 1990 and 1992 letters were prepared and mailed to interest groups, neighboring natural resource management agencies, and other persons known to have an interest in National Forest management activities on the Wind River Ranger District. These letters requested public input for the Silver Star planning effort. Contacts with persons and organizations with an interest in the area were established and maintained. In 1993, an open house was held and additional public comments were received. Comments were utilized in developing the project objectives, issues and alternatives.

Finding of No Significant Impacts

Based on the Environmental Assessment, I have determined that the proposed project is not a major federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment; an Environmental Impact Statement is not needed. This determination was made considering the following factors:

- There will be no significant expected irreversible or irretrievable commitment of resources. Sufficient information is available to make a reasoned choice among alternatives based on the analysis information in the environmental assessment.
- No significant direct, indirect or cumulative impacts to natural resources or other components of the human environment are anticipated from activities proposed for this project.
- There will be no significant adverse impacts to the Silver Star Roadless area. The construction of non-motorized hiking and horse trails is the only management activity proposed within the roadless area. Construction of trail will not change the roadless characteristics of the area or diminish the capability of the area to provide semi-primitive, non-motorized recreation.
- The Biological Assessment and Biological Evaluations indicate that the proposed project will have no significant adverse impacts on any Threatened, Endangered, or Sensitive species of plants or animals or their habitat.
- Cultural resource sites are avoided or protected by mitigation measures. An approved Cultural Resource Report for the project is on file with the District Archaeologist.
- There will be no significant adverse impacts to wetlands, floodplains, prime farmlands, range land, or forest land, minority groups, civil rights, women, or consumers. No significant adverse effects are anticipated to any other environmentally sensitive or critical areas. No significant adverse effects to public health or safety have been identified.
- The proposed action will be in compliance with relevant Federal, State, and local laws, regulations, and requirements designed for the protection of the environment. The proposed action will meet state water and air quality standards.

Findings Required by Other Laws

This action conforms with current management direction established in the Gifford Pinchot Forest Land and Resource Management Plan. A Biological Evaluation (BE) has been completed in compliance with the Endangered Species Act of 1973 and it has been determined that this activity will have no effect on the northern spotted owl, critical habitat, or any threatened, endangered, or sensitive plant species. An approved Cultural Resource Report for the area included in the project is on file with the District Archaeologist.

Implementation Date

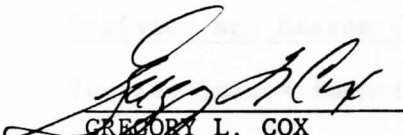
Activity implementation may take place seven days following the date of the publication of this decision notice in the Columbian unless other seasonal restrictions apply.

Administrative Review or Appeal Opportunities

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 217. Any written notice of appeal of this decision must be fully consistent with 36 CFR 217.9, "content of a Notice of Appeal", including the reasons for appeal and must be filed with: Ted Stubblefield, Forest Supervisor, Gifford Pinchot National Forest, 6926 East 4th Plain Blvd. PO Box 8944, Vancouver, WA 98668-8944, Reviewing Officer, and Gregory Cox, District Ranger, Wind River Ranger District, Carson, Washington 98610, Deciding Officer, within 45 days of the date legal notice of this decision appeared in the Columbian, Vancouver, Wa. Appellants must submit two copies of a notice of Appeal to each officer when the Notice is more than ten pages in length.

Contact Person

For further information, contact: Fred Henschell, Wind River Ranger District; Carson, Wa. 98610. Phone: (509) 427-5645.


GREGORY L. COX
District Ranger

December 31, 1993
Date of Decision