

Deschutes & Ochoco National Forests

Crooked River National Grassland

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DECISION MEMO ROCK SPRINGS TRAILS SPECIAL USE PERMIT

**BEND-FORT ROCK RANGER DISTRICT
DESCHUTES NATIONAL FOREST
DESCHUTES COUNTY, OREGON**

DECISION

I have decided to authorize the issuing of a Special Use Permit to Rock Springs Guest Ranch (RSGR) for the non-exclusive use of approximately 25.3 miles of trail and road on the Deschutes National Forest, Bend Fort Rock Ranger District. These trails are in existence and are either single-track trails or use old or current roads. In addition, I am authorizing the construction of .3 miles of trail as well as the obliteration of .6 miles of existing trail. The .3 miles of new trail will replace and bypass the .6 miles of obliterated trail, which is currently within an area of riparian vegetation. The constructed trail will be built to horse standards. There would be no designated trailhead and no additional signing or mapping of trails would be done. The Special Use Permit would authorize use for 5 years, with opportunity for renewal with acceptable performance. The permit would require Rock Springs Guest Ranch to maintain

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SCHEDULE OF PROJECTS

PROJECT INFORMATION

✦ By Administrative Unit

- Deschutes SO
- Bend/Fort Rock
- Crescent
- Sisters
- Ochoco SO
- Lookout Mtn.
- Paulina
- Crooked River NG

✦ Forest Health, Fire, Fuels, Vegetation Management

✦ Wildlife

✦ Recreation

✦ Land Acquisition

✦ Miscellaneous

PLANS, ANALYSES, ASSESSMENTS

▶ **Links**

▶ **Evaluate Our Service**

We welcome your comments on our service and your suggestions for improvement.

Forest

Deschutes National Forest

1001 SW Emkay Drive
Bend, OR 97702

(541) 383-5300

Ochoco National Forest

3160 N.E. 3rd Street
Prineville, OR 97754

(541) 416-6500

**Crooked River National
Grassland**

813 S.W. Hwy. 97
Madras, OR 97741

(541) 475-9272



the trails to US Forest Service standards.

LOCATION

The RSGR project is located in Township 17 South, Range 11 East, Sections 4,5,6, and 31. Rock Springs Guest Ranch is located to the east of the trail system. There are Bureau of Land Management lands between Rock Springs and US Forest Service lands. The Rock Springs Trails project is located approximately 10 miles northwest of Bend, Oregon and is primarily accessed from Highway 20 and County road. The area is bordered on the south and west by Crown Pacific land, on the north by private lands including Tumalo Irrigation property, and on the east by Federal lands managed by Bureau of Land Management land. The BLM has issued a permit for RSGR to use BLM land just east and adjacent to USFS land. The recreation in the area is predominantly dispersed in nature and hosts miles of user created trails and roads. The vegetation is mostly ponderosa pine bordered by juniper and brush areas. The terrain is mostly flat to gently rolling hills with a climb in elevation to the west and south of approximately 100 feet.

The project is located within MA 7 (Deer Winter Range) land allocation in the Deschutes National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan. The project is located outside of the boundaries of the Northwest Forest Plan. The project lies primarily within the Bull 6th field Hydrologic Unit Code (HUC), within the Three Creeks 5th field HUC. This project is within the parameters provided in the Deer Habitat management area objectives, i. e. dispersed recreation developments are permitted as long as they are consistent with the desired condition. The desired condition is to maintain habitat for the protection and reproduction of mule deer. See the LRMP for more detail.

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION

The topography of this area is typified by gently rolling hills and gradually climbing elevation east to west. Trail building has increased over the years as RSGR has utilized much of the area for its guided rides from the ranch.

United States Forest Service (USFS) standards for trail construction establish parameters for maximum gradients; trail widths, clearing limits, and drainage structures. Constructed to these standards, a trail would meet specific levels of difficulty and would drain water properly, thereby minimizing erosion.

There is a need to assess the impacts of the existing trails, on resources. There is also a need to reconstruct the trails to USFS standards where appropriate and relocate short sections of trails where reconstruction of existing trails would be ineffective.

Horseback riding on existing roads and trails within the project area has been a common use for approximately 30 years. Use associated with commercial interests such as outfitter/guides has increased over the years, expanding and further developing the market need. Forest Service regulations require commercial operations to obtain a Special Use Permit prior to using National Forest lands for commercial purposes. RSGR has used the area for years, but has not been under a Special Use permit. There is a need for RSGR to be under a Special Use permit with parameters for type and amount of allowed use, as well as maintenance requirements.

A portion of a single track trail along Bull Springs Creek, and ephemeral, intermittent stream is located within riparian vegetation. The trail is also located within 10 feet of the drainage for approximately .6 miles. There is a need to move the trails within the riparian area and ride further away from the creek to reduce or eliminate impacts to riparian related resources.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This project would grant a Special Use Permit to RSGR for the non-exclusive use of approximately 25.3 miles of trail and road on the Deschutes National Forest, Bend Fort Rock Ranger District. These trails are in existence and are either single-track trails or use old or current roads. In addition, the project would construct .3 miles of trail as well as the obliteration of .6 miles of existing trail. The .3 miles of new trail will replace and bypass the .6 miles of obliterated trail, which is currently within an area of riparian vegetation. The constructed trail will be built to horse standards. The obliteration would consist of placing rocks and logs to disguise the trail and allow regrowth of vegetation. There would be no designated trailhead and no additional signing or mapping of trails would be done. The remainder of the single-track trails would be reconstructed, i.e. erosion control techniques would be applied where needed, such as water barring and drainage dips.

The Special Use Permit would authorize use for 5 years, with opportunity for renewal with acceptable performance. The permit would require Rock Springs Guest Ranch to maintain the trails to US Forest Service standards. A prerequisite would be that RSGR maintain their existing special use permit with BLM, as it is necessary to cross the BLM to access USFS lands.

PUBLIC SCOPING

Letters outlining the proposed action were mailed to approximately 60 interested parties on the Project mailing list on August 15, 2002.

A summary of the proposed action was also included in the Schedule of Projects (SOP) since Winter Issue 2002.

No comments were received from the public.

Internal scoping identified Cultural Resources and riparian vegetation

protection as concerns. The proposed action (Decision) responds to and mitigates these concerns.

MITIGATIONS

1. Encourage Tumalo Irrigation District and BLM to remove or treat with herbicide the spotted knapweed and Dalmation toadflax populations that are growing alongside the canal road.
2. Give the owners of Rock Springs Guest Ranch information on noxious weeds so that they may be aware of noxious weed problems and will be able to keep their own property free of noxious weeds.
3. Request Rock Springs Guest Ranch to inform their personnel about noxious weeds and ask them to keep their animals out of the noxious weed sites.
4. The project area is located within the Tumalo Winter Range Cooperative Closure, and is subject to the applicable restrictions. Although there is no restriction on horse access, vehicle access is not permitted in the closure area between the dates of December 1 and March 31, annually. Any vehicle access associated with the project must occur outside the closure period.
5. Lithic concentrations will be avoided by any new construction.
6. Monitoring trails will be done on an annual basis.
7. Obliteration of user - defined trails, if located within a lithic concentration, will be closed by natural means, i.e. rock/log placement.
8. Obliteration of user - defined trails located outside concentrations, but within the 1997 recorded site boundary, will be monitored.
9. New trail construction will be monitored.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

Appropriate surveys for Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive species were completed and a determination of "No Effect" or "No Impact" was reached for each species. Biological evaluations are contained in the project file.

The riparian area along Bull Springs Creek, although it rarely runs water, hosts riparian vegetation, which has been impacted by trails through it. This project will reroute the trails (.3 mi) and will obliterate the existing trails (.6 mi) within the riparian zone.

An appropriate cultural resource inventory has been completed and there would be no effect to known historic or prehistoric properties eligible for listing under the National Register of Historic Places. See mitigations.

Even though none were found on USFS lands, there are known noxious weed sites on adjacent ownership lands. See mitigations.

FINDINGS

This decision is categorically excluded from documentation in an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement in accordance with 40 CFR 1508.4 and Forest Service Environmental Policy and Procedure Handbook 1909.15. This decision falls within category 31.2(1) and 31.2(3) as established by the Chief of the Forest Service to provide for construction and reconstruction of trails and approval, modification, or continuation of minor special uses of National Forest lands. I have reviewed the physical and biological conditions with resource specialists. I have concluded that the proposed activities are consistent with the intent of trail management plans and in accordance with the Deschutes National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (1990) as amended by the Inland Native Fish Strategy (1995), and the best science of the draft Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project (2000). I have concluded that no extraordinary

circumstances (See Note 1) exist which would indicate this action could have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment. This decision may be implemented immediately upon my signature, and is not subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 215.8 (a) (4).

WALTER C. SCHLOER, JR.

DATE

NOTES

1. As defined by the Interim Direction "Clarification of Extraordinary Circumstances for Categories of Actions Excluded From Documentation" appearing in the Federal Register Vol. 67, No. 164, August 23, 2002.

Posted to web on 3/7/03

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