

# Deschutes & Ochoco National Forests Crooked River National Grassland

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**Projects & Plans**

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**Decision Memo  
For  
Relocation of the Metolius-Windigo Horse Trail, Phase II**

**USDA Forest Service  
Deschutes National Forest  
Crescent Ranger District  
Klamath and Deschutes Counties, Oregon**

**Location**

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**SCHEDULE OF PROJECTS**  
**PROJECT INFORMATION**

♦ **By Administrative Unit**

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- Ochoco SO
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- Crooked River NG

♦ **Forest Health, Fire, Fuels, Vegetation Management**

♦ **Wildlife**

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♦ **Miscellaneous**

**PLANS, ANALYSES, ASSESSMENTS**

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### ▶ 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 Metolius-Windigo National Recreation Trail (often referred to as the Metolius-Windigo Horse Trail, Trail #99) aims to provide opportunities for hiking and horse riding along a route that stretches from Windigo Pass across the Deschutes National Forest to Sheep Springs near the Metolius River. According to the Deschutes Land and Resource Management Plan the intent of this trail is to increase dispersed recreation opportunities, while allowing trail users to encounter a variety of resource management activities along the trail (p. 4-34, TR 34-36).

The legal description of the project area is T23S, R07E, Sections 3 and 10; T22S, R0E, Sections 26, 34, and 35, Willamette Meridian.

## Purpose and Need

When the Deschutes LRMP was written, most of the Metolius-Windigo Trail was located on roads. The objective at that time was to move the trail off of roads in order to eliminate shared use with motorized users. That goal has been met on most of the route. The remaining section of the trail that needs to be designated is located along the west side of Davis Lake where it is wet across several locations during times of high water or it is located on roads that require shared use with motorized vehicles. Relocating it out of the Davis Lake floodplain and into the adjacent forested area would allow the trail to be used when high water occurs and it would also eliminate the shared use.

## Decision and Rationale

I have decided to designate this section of the Metolius-Windigo National Recreation Trail (#99.0), between Ranger Creek and Moore Creek. This route is approximately 4.15 miles, with approximately 2.5 miles of that located on existing roads that will be closed and converted to trail or are already closed to motor vehicles, and 1.6 miles of new trail construction required. The attached diagram shows the route this section of trail will take. Establishment of this portion of the trail will connect it with a segment of the trail constructed in 1999, located on the west side of Forest Road 4660 south of Ranger Butte. The northern terminus will connect with the existing Moore Creek trail segment at Forest Road 4660.

Trail sections will be constructed with standard clearing limits associated with horse/hiker trails. Tread surface will be constructed, where necessary, to a 24-inch width. In many cases along this trail, just removing blowdown will define the trail sufficiently to preclude the need for tread construction. Brush will be cleared 3 feet to either side of centerline, to a point 30 inches above the tread, to a height of 8 feet.

At Moore Creek, a ford will be constructed to tie this segment into the existing trail, which lies along the north side of the creek. The ford will be 36 inches wide. This will consist of a footbridge for use when the creek is running.

By designating this section of trail, the Metolius-Windigo National Recreation Trail is now complete, with the goal of eliminating shared use with motor vehicles realized on nearly the entire length. The trail connects with Forest Road 4600 383 to go along the west side of Ranger Butte. The Davis Fire Area Roads Analysis has recommended closing the road, but allowing intermittent use for administrative purposes. The trail will no longer be located in the Davis lake floodplain which will be an improvement over current conditions and will reduce direct impacts to riparian health. The new trail will be more than ¼ mile at the nearest point from either Davis lake or Ranger Creek.

This decision also includes enlarging the existing parking area on Road 4660 at Moore Creek to accommodate two to three more vehicles than its current capacity. To prevent dispersed camping, a sign would be posted stating "Day Use Only".

The following conditions related to implementation will apply:

- To ensure that personnel and equipment do not introduce weed infestations to the project area, check equipment, materials, shoes, and clothing to make sure they are free of soil, seeds, and other plant parts before working on the trail.
- If future surveys confirm the presence of an occupied bald eagle nest, re-evaluation of trail location and/or determination of seasonal restrictions would be determined.
- Bridge work and any other trail work within the riparian area will be completed only when Moore Creek is dry.

The Metolius-Windigo Trail is intended to be compatible with a variety of management activities. Timber harvest activities may occur along the Metolius-Windigo trail. Page 16 of the Deschutes LRMP Record of Decision (ROD) addresses protection of scenic beauty along trail corridors. Where trail relocation to avoid harvest units is not an option, it was agreed a corridor 1/8 mile to

either side of the Metolius-Windigo trail would be protected by managing for visual objectives using foreground retention or partial retention harvests. Additional standards and guidelines of the ROD emphasize maintaining visual quality by maintaining trail markers and requiring "concurrent slash cleanup where logging conflicts can't be avoided" (ROD-17).

## Scoping and Issues Raised

This proposal has received interdisciplinary review by resource specialists at the Crescent Ranger District. Three concerns were raised during specialist review: cultural resource impacts; effects to bald eagles and BEMAs and effects to a survey and manage bryophyte located in Ranger Creek. These issues were resolved by routing the trail away from any of these resources. By routing the trail behind Ranger Creek and through forested land to the west of the 4660 road, the BEMAs, survey and manage bryophyte, and cultural resources will be avoided.

In addition to in-house review, public notification of this project occurred by letter in August 2000 and again in September of 2002. Approximately 87 recipients of the Crescent Ranger District's mailing list received notice of the proposal. The project also appeared in the *Schedule of Proposed Actions for Deschutes and Ochoco National Forests and the Prineville BLM* since the summer 2000 issue, which is mailed to interested parties and posted on the Internet. We received no input from the public.

## Reason for Categorical Exclusion and Findings

This proposal falls within the categories established in the Forest Service Handbook 1909.15 that do not individually or cumulatively have significant effects on the quality of the human environment (Chapter 31.2(1) - Construction and Reconstruction of Trails). Considering project design, including mitigation measures and conditions related to implementation, I find that no extraordinary circumstances exist that would require the preparation of an environmental assessment. There will be no effect to Threatened and Endangered species or their habitats; there are no inventoried Roadless Areas, Congressionally-designated areas, or Research Natural Areas involved; archaeological or American Indian cultural sites will not be adversely impacted; No floodplains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds will be impacted. Therefore, this project is categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement or environmental assessment.

The Metolius-Windigo Trail Relocation Project lies within the range of the northern spotted owl. Management direction applicable to this project includes the 1990 Deschutes Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) as amended by the Northwest Forest Plan (1994). The project is consistent with the standards and guidelines of the Deschutes National Forest LRMP and ROD for the Northwest Forest Plan. It is also consistent with the goals and objectives of the Odell Pilot Watershed Analysis, the Davis LSR Assessment, and the Aquatic Conservation Strategy. The Odell Watershed Analysis was completed in 1999. This project is consistent with its recommendations.

## Administrative Review

This decision is not subject to legal notice and opportunity to comment (36 CFR 215.4(a)) nor is it subject to appeal (36 CFR 215.12(f)). Project implementation is planned to begin in the spring of 2004.

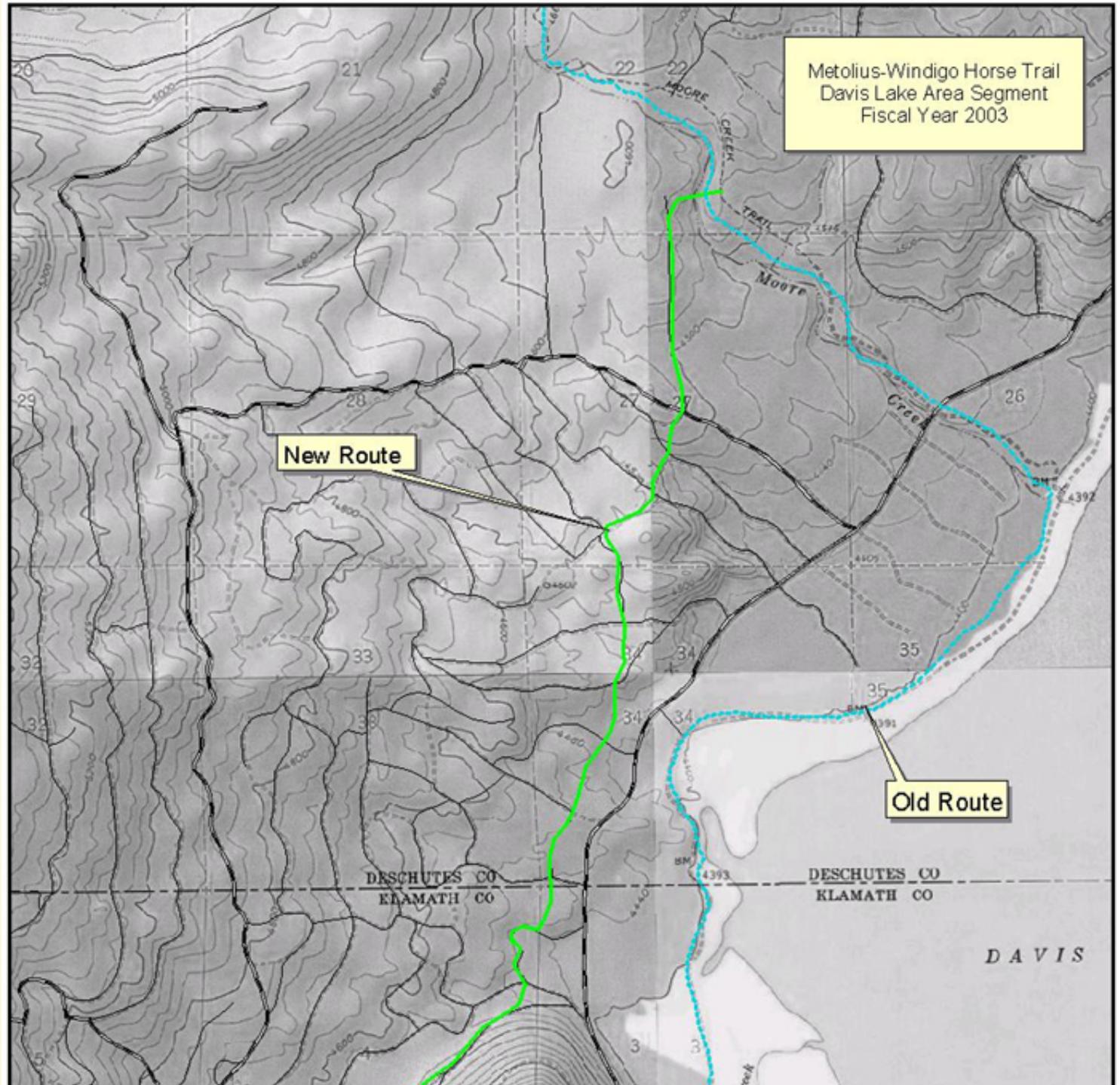
For further information contact Ronda Bishop, Recreation Program Manager, at PO Box 208, Crescent, Oregon, 97733, telephone (541) 433-3200.

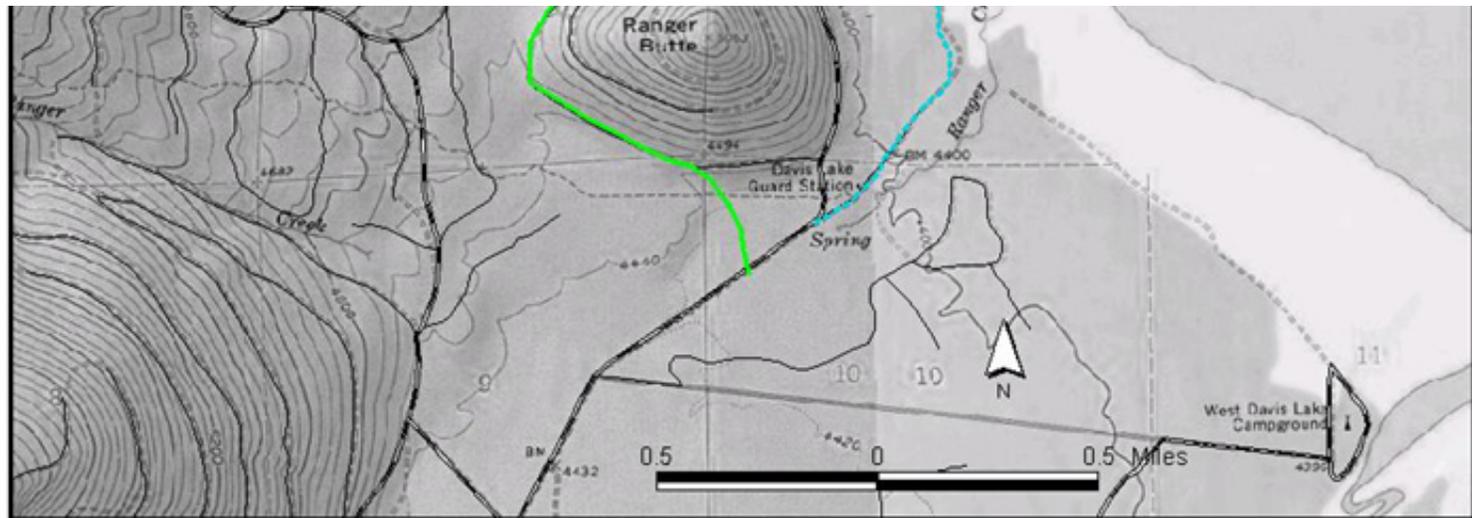
Responsible Official:

/s/ Shane Jeffries  
SHANE JEFFRIES  
Acting District Ranger

October 21, 2003  
Date

Map showing old and proposed routes of Davis Lake Area Segment of Metolius-Windigo Horse Trail





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