



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
MEDFORD DISTRICT OFFICE
3040 Biddle Road
Medford, Oregon 97504
email address: or110mb@or.blm.gov

IN REPLY REFER TO.

1792(117)
Grayback Trail - 2a
G6121(DH:bhk)

JAN 22 2002

Dear Interested Citizen:

Enclosed is a copy of the Decision Record for our Grayback Mountain Trail project - Phase 2a. I thought you might be interested in my decision regarding this project. We plan to initiate construction of this portion of the trail later this year.

This spring we will also be preparing an environmental assessment (**EA**) addressing the location and construction of the remaining portion of the Grayback Mountain Trail. We will send you a notice when it is completed and available for public review and comment. We greatly appreciated hearing from those of you who commented last fall on our earlier EA.

Thank you for your continuing interest in the resource management activities of the Bureau of Land Management and the Grants Pass Resource Area.

Sincerely,

Abbie Jossie
Field Manager
Grants Pass Resource Area

Enclosure (as stated)



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DECISION RECORD/RATIONALE/FONSI *Grayback Mountain Trail Construction- Phase 2a* (EA # OR110-01-50)

I. DECISION: Implement the proposed action for Phase 2a of the Grayback Mountain Trail as described in Environmental Assessment (EA#OR 110-01-50). Implementation of this decision will include all project design features as described in the environmental assessment. As noted in the proposal, this trail will be open to hiking and equestrian-use. It will not be open to bicycle or motorized vehicle use.

As noted in the EA, further site specific analysis of Phases 2b and 3 described in the EA will be conducted in the future and decisions specific to that Phase will be made in the future. The extent to which equestrian use would be permitted will also be further evaluated at that time.

II. RATIONALE: This project is a part of the implementation of the Medford District Resource Management Plan (RMP). The Grayback Mountain Trail was identified in the RMP as one of 16 trails to be developed as a part of providing for recreational opportunities on BLM administered lands. The proposal described in the present EA will extend the initial section constructed in 1990 and move the long term project towards its goal of connecting the Williams Valley to the regional trail systems to the south (Boundary Trail, Red Buttes Trail, Pacific Crest Trail).

This action incorporates several project design features which minimize short and long term adverse effects of the actions to be implemented. Phase 2a of this project addressed here, while **only** a part of the long range plan for the trail, can stand alone on its own merits regardless of the ultimate routing chosen as discussed in the EA. No adverse cumulative effects have been identified that would result from the either Phase 2a or the long term Grayback trail project.

Opportunities for public review and comment of the Grayback Mountain Trail Project were provided for in 2000 for Phase 1 and again in 2001 for Phase 2a. Formal comment periods were held in both years for the Phase 1 and Phase 2a environmental assessments. No comments were received during the comment period for the Phase 1 EA. Comments from members of the local community and during the 2000 National Trails Day program were all very supportive of the trail project. Three letters of comment and a petition were received regarding the Phase 2a proposal and EA. These comments requesting that the Grayback trail and the larger Boundary Trail be open to motorized use / OHVs. They requested that it be designated as a "multiple use trail with motorized designation".

Motorized use of the Grayback trail is, however, precluded by the Medford District R M P

- The trail is within the East IV / Williams Late-Successional Reserve. The RMP (p. 67) limits Off-Highway Vehicle use in LSRs to designated roads.
- The trail will either be located in or adjacent to the Grayback Glades Research Natural Area. RNAs are closed to motorized use (p. 67, RMP). If the trail is located outside the RNA, it would still be in the LSR where OHV use is limited to designated roads. The Grayback Mountain Trail is not a designated road.
- The trail is within a watershed infected by Port-Orford Cedar root disease. The RMP (p. 66) directs that off highway vehicle use will be limited to designated roads in areas that have been infected by Port-Orford root disease.

Additional reasons that would preclude motorized use of the trail include:

- The trail is located in erosive granitic soils. Designing and building the trail to accommodate OHV use would result in excessive site disturbance. Steep side slopes limit the width of the trail being constructed, therefore making it too narrow for quads. Switchbacks would limit the use of other motorized uses and would contribute to erosion if used by motorized vehicles.
- The trail passes through critical habitat for the northern spotted owl. The USFWS Biological Opinion pertinent to this project restricts noise beyond ambient levels between March 1 to June 15th (and potential beyond) if a) within 1/4 mile of known nest locations if the nest is determined to be active or, b) within 1/4 mile of unsurveyed suitable habitat. Annual review and surveys would be required to permit motorized uses.
- The trail also passes through *Cypripedium* habitat and a *Cypripedium* population is located adjacent the trail. Motorized uses could disrupt the soil and duff in the vicinity of this survey and manage species.

The No Action Alternative was rejected because it does not meet the RMP's objective for developing additional recreational opportunities on BLM lands.

This decision is consistent with the Medford District Resource Management Plan and the Record of Decision and Standards and Guidelines on Management of Habitat for Late-Successional and Old-Growth Forest Related Species Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl and, the Record of Decision and Standards and Guidelines for Amendments to the Survey and Manager, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines (January 2001). This decision is also consistent with the Endangered Species Act, The Native American Religious Freedom Act and cultural resource management laws and regulations.

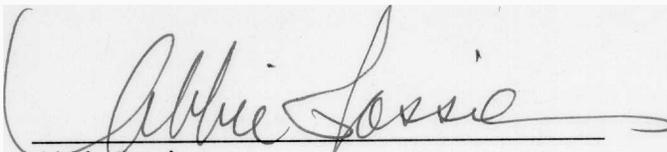
This decision is consistent with and will further the BLM's Strategic Planning Goal 1.01: "Provide

opportunities for environmentally responsible recreation.”

This decision will not have any adverse impacts to energy development, production, supply and/or distribution (per Executive Order **13212**).

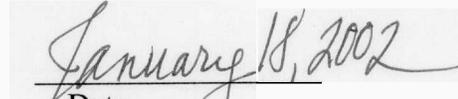
III. FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT: On the basis of the information contained in the environmental assessment for the subject project, it is my determination that the decision stated above does not constitute significant effects to the quality of the human environment. In addition this project does not exceed the range of effects discussed in the EIS documents to which the project EA is tiered. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not necessary and will not be prepared.

In accordance with the BLM Forest Management Regulation **43 CFR 5003** - Administrative Remedies, the effective date of the decision will be the date of publication of the Notice of Decision and FONSI in The Grants Pass Daily Courier. Any protest must be made in accordance with **43 CFR 5003.3**.



Abbie Jossie
Field Manager
Grants Pass Resource Area

Medford District, Bureau of Land Management



January 18, 2002
Date