

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
for the
Smullin Visitor Center at Rand Expansion

EA# OR-110-03-26

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
MEDFORD DISTRICT
GRANTS PASS RESOURCE AREA

August 2003

Dear Reader:

We appreciate your interest in the BLM's public land management activities. We also appreciate your taking the time to review this environmental assessment (EA). If you would like to provide us with written comments regarding this project or EA, please send them to Abbie Jossie, Field Manager, Grants Pass Resource Area at 3040 Biddle Road, Medford, OR 97504 or email them to or110mb@or.blm.gov.

If you would like to comment confidentially, please be aware that comments, including names and addresses of respondents, will be available for public review or may be held in a file available for public inspection and review unless you request confidentiality. If you wish to withhold your name or street address from public review or from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act, you must state this clearly at the beginning of your written comment. Such requests will be honored to the extent allowed by law. All submissions from organizations or officials of organizations or businesses will be made available for public inspection in their entirety.

I look forward to hearing from you and your continued participation in the management of our public lands. Thank you.

Abbie Jossie
Field Manager
Grants Pass Resource Area

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
MEDFORD DISTRICT
EA COVER SHEET

RESOURCE AREA: *Grants Pass*

FY & EA #: OR-110-03-26

ACTION/TITLE: *Smullin Visitor Center at Rand Expansion*

LOCATION: *Rand Administrative Site - T34S, R8W, Section 24; Josephine County, Oregon*

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Chapter 1. Purpose of and Need for Action

A. Introduction

This environmental assessment (EA) will assist in the decision-making process by assessing the environmental and human effects that would result from implementing the proposed project or alternatives. The EA will also assist in determining if an environmental impact statement (EIS) needs to be prepared or if a finding of no significant impact (FONSI) is appropriate.

This EA tiers to the following documents:

1. *Final EIS and Record of Decision for the Medford District Resource Management Plan (RMP) (June 1995);*
2. *Final Supplemental EIS on Management of Habitat for Late-Successional and Old-Growth Forest Related Species within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl (February 1994);*
3. *Record of Decision for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl and its attachment A entitled Standards and Guidelines for Management of Habitat for Late-Successional and Old-Growth Forest Related Species Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl (NFP) (April 13, 1994);*
4. *Record of Decision and Standards and Guidelines for Amendments to the Survey and Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines (January 2001);*
5. *Rogue National Wild and Scenic River Revised Development and Management Plan, (July 7, 1972); and*
6. *The Rogue National Wild and Scenic River: Hellgate Recreation Area Proposed Recreation Area Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement (March 2003) (RAMP).*

B. Purpose of and Need for the Proposal

1. Need/Background

The visitor center is located at the Rand Administrative Site, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The administrative site is comprised of 12 buildings, nine of which were built by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) between 1933 and 1937, including the visitor center facility (then known as the Rand Ranger Station Office). The Rand site is recognized in the National Register as an “ensemble”; therefore, all the buildings, structures, and site features inside the nominated boundaries are considered historically significant.

The visitor center building is a wood frame structure approximately 500 square feet in area. The building presently houses a reception area (280 square feet), restroom (30 square feet), and office space (190 square feet). The reception area has a counter where wild river permits are issued. Static

educational/interpretive displays line the walls. The restroom occupies one corner of the reception area, and does not meet accessibility standards. The office space consists of two separate rooms: one room contains a desk, PC work station, printer, and file cabinets; the second room contains a PC work station, copy machine, and office supply storage.

The visitor center is open to the public between May 10 and October 20, seven days a week, 9.5 hours a day. During this time, a staff of three BLM employees issues non-commercial float permits for the “wild” section of the Rogue, reschedules cancelled wild section permit starts, processes wild section outfitter and guide Commercial Trip Confirmation and Authorization cards, and provides general recreation, educational, and interpretive information concerning the Rogue Wild and Scenic River to the public. On any given day, this work load consists of issuing up to 15 non-commercial float permits, answering 75 phone calls, processing up to 5 commercial float trips, and interfacing with over 100 recreationists (commonly 15-20 at a time). The remainder of the year the office is used by two employees for administrative purposes.

The existing building is not universally accessible, and its size and layout are inadequate for its present and anticipated future use of providing quality public services for the recreationists of the Wild and Scenic Rogue River. In the late 1980s, BLM identified the need to improve working conditions for its staff, along with providing an accessible facility to the public. Public scoping and plans were completed for various alternatives between 1999 and 2000. Based on public comments during that phase, comments received during the Hellgate Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) planning process, comments from the City of Grants Pass and other interested individuals, the BLM refined its proposed visitor center to the current proposed action. Some of these concerns included, but were not limited to, appropriate location for a destination visitor center; increased traffic; level of services; and visual intrusion.

Relocation of the Resource Area staff from Medford to Grants Pass will include the location of some river management staff at Rand by 2005.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this project is to expand the existing visitor center to provide better public services through a universally accessible facility as mandated by the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), and to improve working conditions for employees assigned to the visitor center.

C. Project Location

See Appendix A, Vicinity Map.

D. Issues Relevant to the Project Proposal

Issues identified by the BLM interdisciplinary planning team and responding publics pertinent to the project include:

- Current facility does not meet universally accessible standards as required by ADA.
- The design of the visitor center expansion must preserve the historic character of the Rand ensemble and the historic character of the building itself.
- The visitor center expansion must protect and/or enhance the outstandingly remarkable values of the Wild and Scenic Rogue River, which include natural scenic qualities, fisheries, and recreational opportunities.
- The visitor center must provide a safe and productive working environment for center staff and the approximately 10,000 customers served each year.

Chapter 2 Proposed Action

A. Alternative 1: No Action

The no action alternative is defined as not implementing the proposed action. The no action alternative also serves as a baseline for evaluating the environmental effects of the action alternative. The visitor center would remain the same size, and in the same configuration.

B. Alternative 2: Proposed Action

The proposed action is to expand the visitor center as shown in Appendix B, Floor Plan. Expansion would include excavation for the foundation of the new addition, and placement of a new sewer system in the lawn strip behind the blacksmith's shop (caretaker's garage). One 14" DBH Oregon White Oak would be removed for the expansion. All proposed work would occur in existing lawn areas within the Rand complex. Storage of equipment and materials during construction would be located at the south end of the Rand complex.

The existing building would be repaired where needed utilizing materials consistent with the style and shape of the existing structure (e.g., fire retarded cedar shake roof, wood trimmed windows, etc.). The exterior would maintain the features as they exist today. The interior would be modified as shown in Appendix B, Floor Plan, and would be utilized primarily for public services (wild river permit issuance, educational/interpretive displays, bathrooms, etc.).

The exterior of the new addition would be designed to closely represent the original structure with subtle changes for purposes of distinguishing the era of construction. The three primary changes include a lower roof line, slightly larger wood windows, and a painted concrete foundation rather than the vertical board and batten skirting that conceals the foundation on the original / existing structure. This square footage is planned to be used for administrative purposes only.

The replacement of the sewer system will include a new septic tank and leach field located behind the blacksmith's shop in order to accommodate the additional capacity of two restrooms (per DEQ requirements).

All disturbed areas would be reseeded with perennial grasses upon completion of each work phase.

The project will be submitted to Oregon's State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) as required by the Protocol for Managing Cultural Resources on Lands Administered by the Bureau of Land Management in Oregon for their information, review and comment as appropriate. The Protocol implements BLM's national cultural resources Programmatic Agreement (PA) in Oregon by describing how SHPO and BLM will interact and cooperate under that agreement.

C. Project Design Features

Project Design Features (PDFs) help reduce potential environmental impacts due to implementation of the proposal. The following PDFs would be incorporated:

1. Soil and Water

Sediment barriers would be placed down-slope from the expansion area and the sewer replacement area during construction. Dry-well sumps will be constructed for the roof to provide subsurface water dissipation.

2. Cultural

The CCC-constructed masonry walls within the project area would not be disturbed during construction by breaching, driving equipment over it, etc. Directional boring may be used to place the septic line under the wall behind the existing visitor's center, and possibly the wall across the driveway, beside the blacksmith's shop.

An archeologist will be on site when any subsurface excavations are made including the foundation for the visitor center addition, the sewer lines and septic tank.

Shingles used for re-roofing the existing visitor center and roofing the new visitor center will be a "modified" red cedar shake (hand split on one side and re-sawn on the other side), Class A fire retarded, No. 1 Grade or the equivalent.

3. Visual Resources

The new addition will be screened from view from the Galice Road by planting native vegetative along the entrance road into the administrative site.

The degree of contrast and reflectivity as seen from the Galice Road, the river, and from the river bank (river right) would be kept low by painting the visitor center (VC) a darker hue of brown than presently exists.

Reduce the degree of contrast and reflectivity from the Galice Road, from the river and river bank (river right) by installing windows smaller or equal to 3' x 4' that would be compatible with the existing windows.

Maintain screening of the existing and expanded structure by retaining the three trees closest to the CCC-constructed masonry wall. These trees screen the boat barn and river equipment from view of the Galice Road, and they screen the VC when viewed from the river and river bank (river right). In addition, these trees would also screen the proposed project activity during construction.

Chapter 3 Affected Environment and Environmental Effects

A. Introduction

Only substantive site-specific environmental changes that would result from implementing the proposed action are discussed in this chapter. If an ecological component is not discussed, it should be assumed that the resource specialists have considered effects to that component and found the proposed action would have minimal or no effects. Similarly, unless addressed specifically, the following were found not to be affected by the proposed action: air quality; areas of critical environmental concern (ACEC); Native American religious sites; prime or unique farmlands; flood plains; and wilderness.

B. Environmental Effects

1. Fisheries

a. Affected Environment

There are no fish bearing streams within the project area. The Rogue River, a Class 1 river, is located approximately 400 feet away from the project area. The Rogue River has perennial flows and anadromous fish use. The Hellgate Recreation Area is a migration corridor for salmonids. Fall chinook are the primary salmonid using the area. Other salmonids, such as coho salmon, steelhead, and trout, migrate and spawn in tributaries of the Rogue River. The National Marine Fisheries Service listed coho salmon for the Southern Oregon/Northern California (SONC) coasts Evolutionarily Significant Unit (ESU) as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. The riparian reserve width is 360 feet at this location (two site potential tree heights). The proposed visitor center expansion is not within this riparian reserve.

b. Environmental Effects

1) Alternative 1: No Action

The fisheries resource would remain unchanged.

2) Alternative 2: Proposed Action

Because of the distance of the proposed project from the nearest fish bearing stream, the small size of the project and the PDFs that will prevent the flow of sediment, no effects to fisheries or aquatic resources are anticipated from the proposed actions. This determination includes short and long term, direct and indirect, and cumulative effects. Impacts have been considered temporally on the short term and long term scales, and spatially at the project/site and watershed scales. Thus there would be no effect to coho salmon or coho critical habitat from the proposed action. Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) for coho and chinook salmon is present in the Rogue River per the Magnuson-Stevens Act. The proposed action would not adversely affect EFH for coho and chinook salmon. The proposed action

would not hinder attainment of the Aquatic Conservation Strategy Objectives of the Northwest Forest Plan.

The Rogue River was recognized under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968 for its Outstandingly Remarkable Value of salmon and steelhead sport fisheries. The proposed project would not affect the outstandingly remarkable fishery value.

2. Soil and Water

a. Affected Environment

The project site is located approximately 400 feet from the Rogue River, and is outside the flood plain. The entire project area is located in previously disturbed areas within the Rand complex with a slope gradient of 2 - 5%. These areas are covered by existing lawn grass.

The broader area wherein the Rand complex is located is characterized by steep mountains encompassing a narrow river valley. Mountain slopes are long and generally dissected. The mountains are made up of altered volcanic and sedimentary rock and intrusive igneous rock. The layered rocks have been steeply folded, faulted, and, in places, intruded by granitic rock and peridotite, much of which has been altered to serpentine.

The river valley consists of flood plains, terraces, alluvial fans, and hills. The Rand complex is located on a narrow terrace. Terraces are broad to narrow, nearly level areas of water-deposited material. Soils on the river terraces are mainly deep and well drained. These soils formed in alluvium and colluvium that weathered from altered sedimentary and extrusive igneous parent material. Slopes range from 2 - 25%. Typical soil series found on this landscape are Takilma, Kerby, and Abegg. Textures of the soils found in these areas are cobbly loam, gravelly loam, and loam. Erosion potential for these soils is moderate.

b. Environmental Effects

1) Alternative 1: No Action

Any minimal current soil and water impacts due to site runoff would continue. Current roof runoff would continue as a surface flow.

2) Alternative 2: Proposed Action

Potential effects to soil or water would be precluded during construction through the placement of sediment barriers down-slope of all work. Any sediment deposits would be leveled prior to reseeding. The gutter runoff would be dispersed as a sub-surface flow through the dry-well sumps and preclude any runoff or sediment reaching the Rogue River.

Based on DEQ's approval for the septic system, there would be no short term, long term, cumulative,

beneficial or adverse effects anticipated from the new sewer system on soils or water.

3. Botany

a. Affected Environment

The project area is dominated by non-native grasses with an oak overstory. No noxious weeds were found during a recent survey. No habitat exists for federally listed, special status or Survey and Manage vascular species; therefore, it was not necessary to conduct surveys. No special status or Survey and Manage non-vascular species were located on the oak that would be removed.

b. Environmental Effects

1) Alternative 1: No Action

The current vegetation would remain as is.

2) Alternative 2: Proposed Action

Since no special status or Survey and Manage vascular or non-vascular species were located during surveys and riparian vegetation would not be impacted, no short term, long term, cumulative, beneficial or adverse effects are anticipated from the proposed action.

4. Wildlife

a. Affected Environment

The land within the project area provides habitat for few species of wildlife. The area has been managed as an administrative facility, with several buildings, a paved driveway and horticultural plantings. The project area provides potential man-made habitat for the Yuma Myotis bats in the roofs and basements of several buildings, including the visitor center. The Yuma Myotis bat is a Bureau Tracking species. The following discussion of potential impacts on this species is based on habitat alteration. For the purpose of this effects analysis, it is assumed that all potential habitat is occupied. The actual effects would thus be equal to or less than those identified.

The project area is surrounded by existing roads, developments, and residences. There is a baseline level of disturbance associated with ongoing operations at the Rand complex, based on the recreation and urban interface aspect of the project area.

b. Environmental Effects

1) Alternative 1: No Action

The recreation, facility operations and urban interface activities would continue. Bat use of existing structures would likely continue at their current level.

2) Alternative 2: Proposed Action

The primary impacts associated with the expansion project would be due to roof replacement. This replacement could disturb roosting bats or disrupt bats from utilizing the roof for roosting or feeding at night. The potential for disturbance to bats is likely to be immediate if use is occurring in the roof. Bats would likely be able to fly away from the disturbance into nearby trees for the remainder of the day. There are other roost sites in adjacent buildings where potentially displaced bats could find adequate day roosts following disturbance. The disturbance to potential man-made roost habitat within the project area would be limited to one building. Since similar style wood shakes would be utilized on the facility, no long-term loss of potential habitat would occur.

5. Cultural

a. Affected Environment

Within the project area, there are two known historic sites and the potential for a buried pre-historic site.

As described in the National Register nomination, the Rand Ranger Station Office (Smullin Visitor Center) was constructed by the CCC in 1933-1934 and is sited near the Galice Road. It is oriented in a westerly direction. The visitor center is a one-story, rectangular, wood frame building, constructed on sloping ground, has a wood post-and-concrete block foundation and a split-shake covered gable roof with exposed rafters. The dwelling is sheathed in narrow, wood, horizontal siding. Vertical board and batten skirting conceals the foundation. A covered porch hood supported by two, four-inch square brackets extend over the central entrance on the west elevation. The architectural style of this building is classified as Oregon Rustic.

An examination of the 1930s photos of these historic properties for roofing materials indicates that wooden shingle roofs were used. Historically, wooden shingles were thin, relatively narrow, of varying length, and almost always smooth (Preservation Briefs #19). The CCC was known for the quality and craftsmanship of their buildings. In all probability, the shingles used for the original roofs were hand split and dressed or planed with a drawknife to make them fit evenly on the roof.

The Rand Ranger Station Ensemble is important for its association with the CCC, an important federal response to the Depression and an organization that helped shape this isolated area. The Ensemble's historic period of significance extends from 1933 when the CCC arrived at Rand to 1941 when the camp disbanded as war threatened. The Rand Ranger Station Ensemble buildings have received few significant alterations.

Another historic site, the CCC camp itself, lies at the south end of the Rand Ranger Station Ensemble. This site consists of the remains of buildings and structures which housed the men who built the Rand Ranger Station. The majority of buildings and structures were removed sometime after 1941. Remnants of this historic site include the rock water fountain, the rock lined flag pole, and the trash dump.

In addition to the two historic sites, there may be prehistoric sites beneath the Rand Ranger station.

b. Environmental Effects

1) No Action Alternative

Under current management, the visitor center would continue to be maintained as a contributing structure within the Rand ensemble without any change in appearance.

2) Alternative 2: Proposed Action

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation call for the repair or replacement of missing architectural features based on accurate duplication of features, substantiated by historic, physical, or pictorial evidence rather than on conjectural designs. The project is designed to meet these standards. Therefore, there would be no impact on the qualities that made the original structure eligible for the National Register since replica materials would be utilized in all cases.

The new visitor center addition would compliment the original structure through replica materials with a few subtle changes. Based on consultation with Oregon SHPO, there would be no impacts to the Rand Ranger Station historic ensemble.

With implementation of the cultural PDFs, which require an archeological monitor during excavations for the visitor center, sewer lines, septic tank, any culturally significant objects would be properly preserved and thus there would be no impact to either the historic or potential pre-historic resources.

6. W&S Rivers and Visual Resources

a. Affected Environment

The Rand Administrative Site is located in the 27-mile corridor of the Hellgate Recreation Area of the Rogue National Wild and Scenic River. The site is at the base of lush forested mountains with steep slopes. The thick forested landscape consists of dark green conifer trees and gray-green hardwood trees and brush, which pleasantly blend with each other, creating a coarse, dense texture. The project area itself is dominated by green grasses and diverse vegetation surrounded by an oak overstory of greens and grays.

The Rogue National Wild and Scenic River is classified as Visual Resource Management (VRM) Class

I (USDI, RMP 1995). The outstandingly remarkable values (ORVs) are: natural scenic qualities, fisheries, and recreational opportunities (USDI, RAMP 2003).

b. Environmental Effects

1) No Action Alternative

There would be no changes to the ORVs of natural scenic qualities or recreational opportunities.

The visitor center would continue to be non-compliant with the ADA requirements. This would have an adverse effect to the public as well as being contrary to the law's objectives and requirements. In addition, the size and layout of the visitor center would continue to be inadequate for its present and future use. Severe crowding in the building will continue to have a potentially adverse impact on the quality of public services for all recreationists of the Rogue National Wild and Scenic River.

2) Alternative 2: Proposed Action

Implementation of visual resource PDFs would preclude adverse visual effects or effects to the natural scenic qualities ORV and to the character of the landscape surrounding the Rand Administrative Site. Thus, there would be no long term, cumulative, beneficial or adverse effects of this alternative. In regards to visual resource management (VRM), there would be no long term direct effects to the recreation user as seen from the Galice Road and as seen from the river and riverbank (river right). In the short-term, some visual contrast would occur as the site is disturbed during the construction phase.

The recreation ORV would be enhanced. The visitor center space would be improved to better serve the commercial and private river users, and the general public for recreation, educational, and interpretive information. The public facility would meet universally accessible standards as required by the ADA. The visitor center would be improved providing a safe and attractive facility for both the public and river management staff.

Chapter 4 Agencies and Persons Consulted

A. Public Involvement

Public scoping and plans were completed for various alternative visitor center expansion proposals in 1999 – 2000. Extensive public involvement occurred relative to these proposals and within the context of the Hellgate Recreation Activity Management Plan (RAMP). Based on these comments and extensive discussions with river users groups, the City of Grants Pass and other potential partners and interest groups the design solution to visitor center need evolved and was refined into the current project proposal.

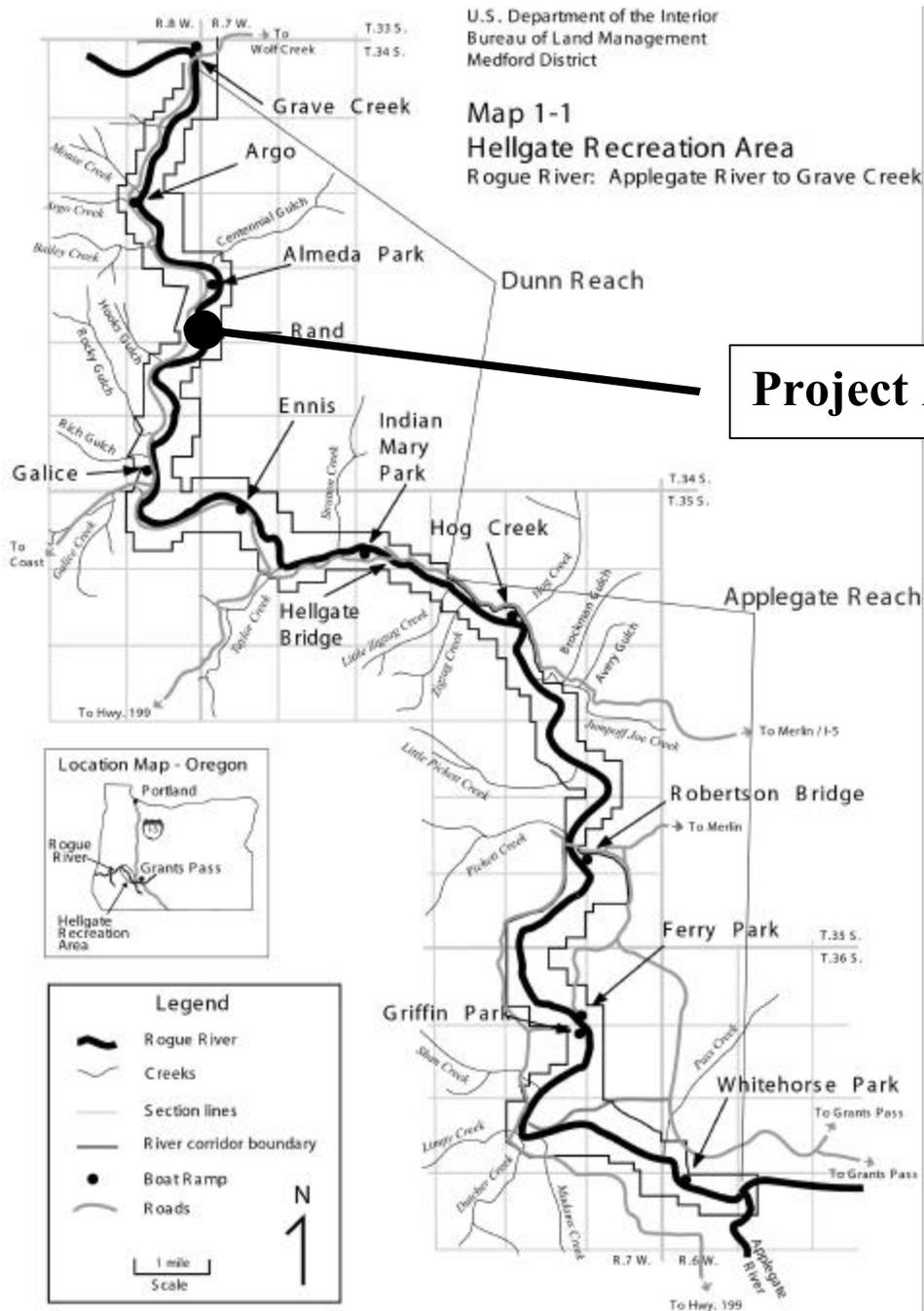
Project scoping specific to this project was initiated via a March 3, 2003 mailing to 486 individuals, outfitters and guides, organizations, Tribes, public entities and officials. A newspaper article about the proposed project was published in the Grants Pass Courier on March 14, 2003. Eleven letters were received in response to this most recent scoping solicitation. All respondents except one were in favor of the “modest” expansion. The primary concern emphasized was the need to maintain the historic integrity of the Rand complex. The one respondent in opposition was opposed to any government facility expansion for the needs of the agency or the public.

B. Availability of Document and Comment Procedures

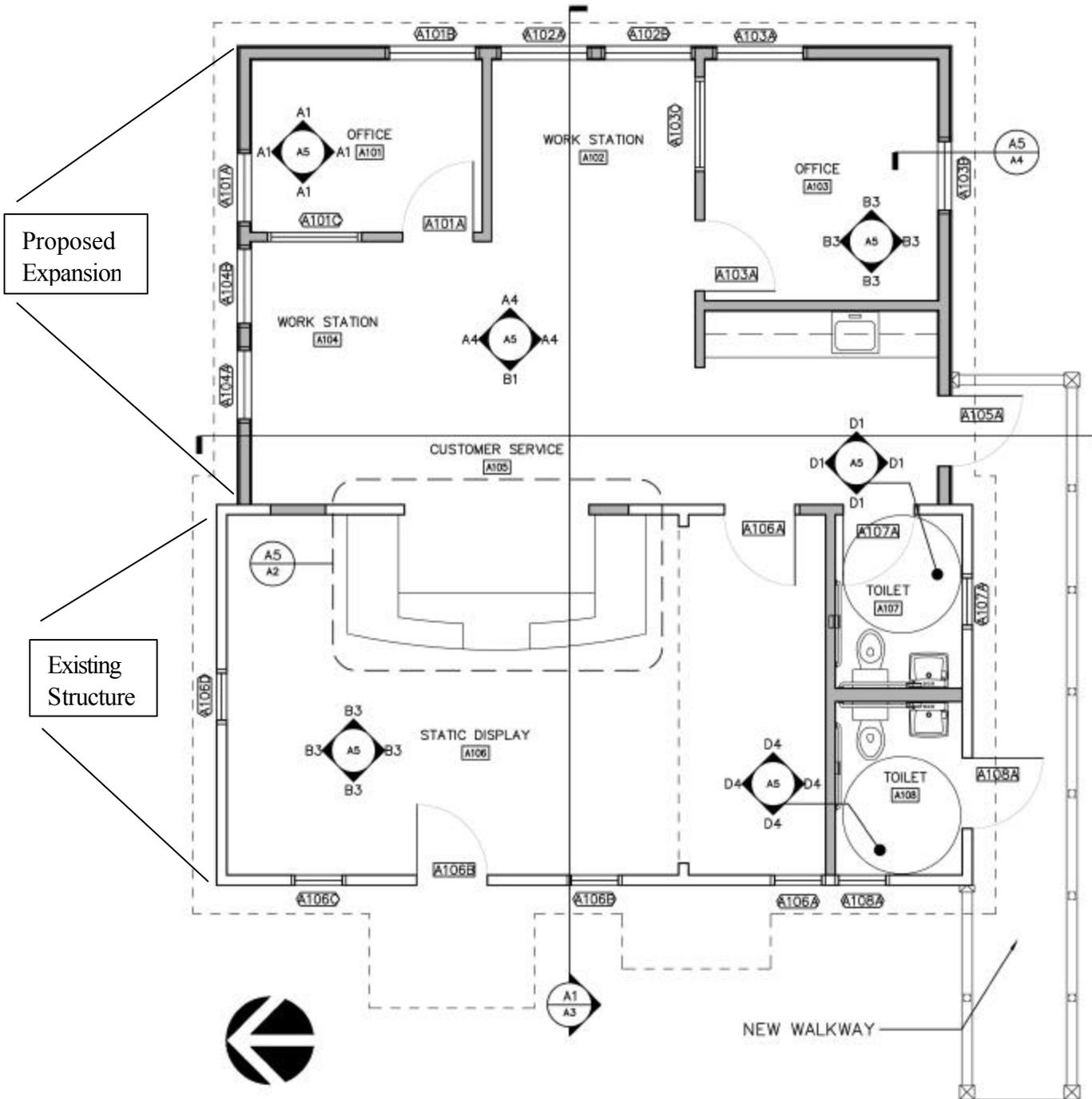
Copies of the EA will be available for public review in the BLM Medford District Office as well as on the Medford District's web site (www.or.blm.gov/Medford) under planning documents / environmental assessments. A formal 30-day public comment period will be held following an announcement in the Grants Pass Daily Courier.

Written comments should be addressed to Abbie Jossie, Field Manager, Grants Pass Resource Area, at 3040 Biddle Road, Medford, OR 97504. E-mailed comments may be sent to or110mb@or.blm.gov.

APPENDIX A
Smullin Visitor Center at Rand Expansion
Vicinity Map



APPENDIX B
Smullin Visitor Center at Rand
Expansion Floor Plan



Proposed Expansion

Existing Structure

Smullin Visi

B1 FLOOR PLAN
 1/4" = 1'-0"