ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

for the

Kerby Peak Trail Reconstruction

(EA# OR117-00-13)

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

May 2000

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 John Prendergast, Grants Pass Area Manager, at 3040 Biddle Road, Medford, OR 97504.

If confidentiality is of concern to you, 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. Individual respondents may 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.

John Prendergast
Grants Pass Field Manager

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
MEDFORD DISTRICT

EA COVER SHEET

RESOURCE AREA: *Grants Pass* FY & REPORT # EA Number OR-117-00-13

ACTION/TITLE: *Kerby Peak Trail Reconstruction*
LOCATION: T.38S. R.6W. section 31; T.39S. R.6W. section 6, 7 & 8; T.38S. R7W section 36; and T.39S. R7W. section 1 Willamette Meridian, Josephine Co., Oregon.

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GRANTS PASS RESOURCE AREA
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Kerby Peak Trail Reconstruction

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Chapter 1
Purpose of and Need for Action

A. Introduction

The purpose of this environmental assessment (EA) is to assist in the decision making process by assessing the environmental and human affects resulting from implementing the proposed action and/or alternatives. This 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) the Final EIS and Record of Decision dated June 1995 for the Medford District Resource Management Plan dated October 1994 (RMP);
(2) the Final Supplemental EIS on Management of Habitat for Late-Successional and Old-Growth Forest Related Species within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl dated February 1994; and
(3) the 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 the Standards and Guidelines for Management of Habitat for Late-Successional and Old-Growth Forest Related Species Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl dated April 13, 1994 (NFP).

This EA is also draws from the following documents:

(1) Deer Creek Watershed Analysis, Medford District, Grants Pass Resource Area, 1997.
(2) Grayback/Sucker Watershed Analysis, Siskiyou National Forest, U.S. Forest Service, 1995.
(3) Brewer Spruce Research Natural Area Management Plan, Medford District, Grants Pass Resource Area, 1965.
(4) Bureau of Land Management Port-Orford Cedar Management Guidelines (September 1994).
(5) Source Book for Natural Area Coordinators (March 1990)
(6) USDI, BLM Interim Management Policy for Lands under Wilderness Review (July 1995)

B. Purpose and Need for the Proposal

The broad purpose of the proposed action is to implement the Medford District's Resource Management Plan (RMP). This Kerby Peak Trail is one of 16 potential trails identified in the RMP to be developed as funding, opportunity and workload allows.

Currently, visitors follow multiple flagged and ad hoc brushed trails leading to the Rabbit Lake area. The trail is also advertised in a local hiking guidebook. The recommended route is a steep and relatively unsafe route that is indiscriminately brushed by users for access. It is poorly marked by sporadic flagging which further adds to the safety hazard for hikers following that route.

C. Project Location

The general location of the proposed project is shown on Map 1. (All maps are located in Appendix A.) The project area is located in T38S, R6W section 31; T39S, R6W section 6, 7 & 8; T38S, R7W section 36; and T39S, R7W. section 1 Willamette Meridian. The proposed trail location is on BLM, U.S. Forest Service and a small portion of State of Oregon land (T38S, R7W, sec. 36).

D. Issues and Concerns Relevant to the Project

A variety of issues and concerns were identified during the initial scoping of this project. These were raised by the project planning team, resource area's Interdisciplinary (ID) team or have been drawn from some of the documents noted above. These issues were used in the design of the proposed project and alternatives. In some cases an issue raised was considered at the onset by the planning team and then eliminated from further consideration because it was not judged to be within the scope of the project or proposed action(s). These are summarized in Appendix B. The pertinent issues identified for this project are:

1. There is a potential for introduction of non-native vegetative species with increased uses.

2. The area includes an unusual combination of the Port-Orford Cedar/Shasta Red Fir/Brewer Spruce plant community with Alaska Yellow Cedar and Brewer Spruce present. Additionally, the Port-Orford Cedar at this a location appears to be highly resistant to *Phythophothera lateralis*. There also appears to be a second Port-Orford cedar community that has not be previously described.

3. Potential for increased impacts to wetlands around Rabbit Lake from additional use.

4. Increased recreational use may increase fire risk.

5. There is peregrine habitat near trail. Trail use may cause disturbance that might impact the habitat.

6. The route follows an historic trail built in 1915 from the east fork of White Creek Road to Rabbit Lake and Holcomb Peak.

7. A portion of the trail passes through the Brewer Spruce RNA which in 1975 was also designate an “Instant Study Area” as a part of a wilderness eligibility review process. Congress has not acted on the recommendation to drop the area from further wilderness consideration due to its size and it is managed consistent with interim wilderness management guidelines.

E. Land Use Allocation and Objectives

On federal land, the proposed trail location is in three NFP/RMP land allocations. The broad management objectives for each of these allocations are spelled out in the NFP and the Medford District RMP and Siskiyou National Forest LRMP.

1. BLM administered land

Late-Successional Reserve (LSR): The broad objective includes protecting and enhancing conditions of late-successional and old growth forest ecosystems. Existing developments are to be retained and maintained as long as they are consistent with the objectives (USDI BLM, 1995). The trail through the LSR (3/4 mile) follows the route of an existing historic route through the area.

Administratively Withdrawn Area: The proposed trail passes through the Brewer Spruce Research

Natural Area (RNA). Objectives of RNAs include preservation of important features for scientific study, research and education.

The Brewer Spruce RNA was designated as an Instant Study Area (ISA) for wilderness review in 1975. It was determined to lack wilderness values due to its size. The President subsequently proposed legislation to Congress to dropped it from further wilderness consideration. Congress has not acted on the recommendation and the area is managed under the interim wilderness management guidelines. The Medford District RMP includes the recommendation that if the area is not designated wilderness, the RNA be enlarged and managed as an ACEC/RNA.

2. Forest Service administered land

Matrix: Approximately 1 mile of the trail from southeast of Rabbit Lake to Forest Service Road 054 is on matrix land.

Chapter 2
Proposed Action and Alternatives

A. Introduction

This chapter describes the proposed action and alternatives that are addressed and analyzed in this EA.

B. Alternative 1: No Action Alternative

In this EA document the "no-action" alternative is defined as not implementing any aspect of the proposed action alternative(s). Defined this way, the no action alternative also serves as a baseline or reference point for evaluating the environmental effects of the action alternatives. Inclusion of this alternative is done without regard to whether or not it is consistent with the Medford District RMP.

The no action alternative is not a "static" alternative. Implicit in it is a continuation of the environmental conditions and trends that currently exist or are occurring within the project area. This would include trends such as vegetation succession and consequent wildlife habitat changes, rates of erosion, trends in fire hazard changes, OHV use, *etc*..

C. Alternative 2: Proposed Actions

1. Introduction/Objective

The objective is to renovate and reconstruct a trail system on the historic route along a ridgeline to provide a recreation opportunity through unique high elevation habitats, including Brewer Spruce, Alaska Yellow Cedar and other rare plant species. The objective is also to limit impacts to one designated trail, rather than having multiple trails into the area, as exists today. It is to provide the safer access to the area than the existing multiple routes that are unmaintained and traverse steep and very difficult terrain. The reconstruction is mainly along a ridgeline, away from the steeper cliffs adjacent to the Rabbit Lake area.

2. Trail location

The proposed action consists of renovating and reconstructing a trail from Kerby Peak to FS road 054 (See Map 2). The proposed route follows an existing historic trail along the ridgeline. This project will extend a portion of trail that has been reconstructed and renovated from the east fork of White Creek and continues to Kerby Peak.

The reconstruction and renovation would begin at Kerby Peak and then crosses state land in section 36 for 1/4 mile. After reaching the ridge above Rabbit Lake, the trail continues onto Forest Service land. A spur trail would travel from the ridge to Rabbit Lake (about 1/8 mile). Total reconstruction and renovation will be 3 miles. The total trail length would equal approximately 6 miles (from E. White Creek to FS Road 054). Approximately 1.6 miles of trail reconstruction is in the RNA expansion area. Approximately one mile is in the ISA.

Trail head parking for approximately 5 cars would be at the existing landing at the end of Forest Service Road 054. Overflow vehicle parking will be at the beginning of Forest Service road 054.

3. Trail reconstruction and signing

The trail tread will be reconstructed and renovated to a total width of 2 feet within the RNA/ISA, and 3 feet outside the RNA/ISA. It would be out-sloped, rolled and dipped for proper drainage. The trail tread will be reconstructed/renovated on a full bench prism with no fill slopes. All debris would be scattered below the trail to blend with the natural landscape. Within the ISA the trail would be built using hand tools only, following the guidelines in the interim wilderness regulations. Outside of the ISA the trail would be built with mechanized equipment (i.e., chainsaws, trail building machines) or with hand tools. Any mechanized equipment used would be washed prior to bringing it to the project site and following use to avoid the spread of *Phythophthora*. If the a trail building machine is used, it would be limited to the dry season (May - September).

All trees identified with orange paint and tags as part of a *Phythophthora* resistance testing program would be protected from felling or limbing during trail clearing/reconstruction. This population may also include natural hybridization between Port-Orford Cedar and Alaska Yellow Cedar, and is undergoing DNA analysis.

Interpretive signing will be installed at the trail head, including information on the RNA and the need for low impact uses of the area. The interpretive sign at the trail head will include information on the adverse effects of picking wild flowers. Interpretive and directional signing will be rustic, blending in with the natural environment. Both ends of the Kerby Peak trail would be posted with an interpretive sign that includes information on the RNA and the potential adverse effects of picking wildflowers.

4. Permitted uses

a. Proposed Alternative 2a

The following uses would be permissible on all portions of the trail: Hiking and Day use

The following uses would <u>not</u> be permitted: equestrian / horse use, motorized vehicles, mountain bicycles, campfires, camping.

b. Proposed Alternative 2b

The following uses would be permissible on all portions of the trail: Hiking, equestrian / horse use; Day use.

The following uses would <u>not</u> be permitted: motorized vehicles, mountain bicycles, campfires, camping.

D. Project design features

Project design features (PDFs) are included in the proposed action for the purpose of reducing anticipated adverse environmental impacts which might stem from the implementation of the proposal. The PDFs noted below would be a part of all of the alternatives, unless otherwise noted.

1. Botanical Resource Protection

If localized erosion control is necessary native plant species will be used or sterile wheat grass. Reestablishment of native vegetation will be allowed to occur naturally on other disturbed areas. If any federal candidate, Bureau Sensitive or survey and manage plant species are encountered along the proposed trail location, the trail will be re-routed to avoid these populations.

2. Cultural Resource Protection

If cultural sites are found along the trail, mitigation measures such as rerouting the trail, will be implemented to protect the sites.

Chapter 3
Environmental Consequences

A. Introduction

Only substantive site specific environmental changes that would result from implementing the proposed action or alternatives are discussed in this chapter. If an ecological component is not discussed, it should be assumed that the resource specialists have considered affects to that component and found the proposed action or alternatives would have minimal or no affects. Similarly, unless addressed specifically, the following were found not to be affected by the proposed action or alternatives: air quality; cultural or historical resources; Native American religious concerns; prime or unique farmlands; Flood plains; endangered, threatened or sensitive plant, animal or fish species; water quality (drinking/ground); wetlands/riparian zones; wild and scenic rivers. In addition, hazardous waste or materials are not directly involved in the proposed action or alternatives.

General or "typical" affects from projects similar in nature to the proposed action or alternatives are also described in the EISs and plans this EA is tiered to.

B. Site Specific Beneficial or Adverse Effects of the Alternatives

1. Resource: Soils and Water

a. Affected Environment

The trail is on and adjacent to ridges that separate the Lower Sucker Creek 6th Field Watershed (6FW) and the Upper Deer Creek 6FW. The reconstruction of the trail would start near the top of Kerby Peak (el. 5,545 feet)and continue on and along ridges connecting peaks; unnamed in 39-7-1 (el. 5,459 feet) and Little Grayback Peak (el. 5438 feet). Soil on the trail location are mapped in the Soil Survey of Josephine County as Jayar very gravelly loam northwest and north of Little Grayback Peak and Woodseye-Jayar Complex on and southeast of Little Grayback Peak. Jayar is well drained with very gravelly loam surface and subsoil. Effective soil depth is 20 to 40 inches. Woodseye is similar but shallow depth of 10 to 20 inches. Both soil are underlain by metavolcanic rock.

The route follows an historic trail where there is currently low levels of hiking activity limited mainly to the dry season. Rabbit Lake is very small and shallow, located on a little bench on the north flanks of Little Grayback Peak.

b. Environmental Effects

1) Alternative 1: No Action

Conditions that affect hydrologic condition should remain roughly the same as they are currently. This applies for both short (0 to 5 years) and long (5 to 20 years) terms. The trail route currently has a small amount of foot traffic. There is little evidence of effects to soil and water. It is unlikely that human use would increase in the short term. Long term human use is difficult to project but would be expected to either remain at the current level or increase slightly.

2) Alternative 2: Proposed Action

The trail would be designed in such a way that natural drainage patterns will be maintained. Rolling and out-sloping with 2 to 3 foot total width and dipped for drainage, the trail itself, located in very gravelly soils high on the ridge, should cause minimum, if any, changes of localized runoff and erosion. Under all proposed uses, the trail should have no effect of increased sediment to the stream network in either of the 6th field WS's.

The reconstructed trail would encourage increased hiking use of the area. The reconstruction will create a narrow strip where varying levels of vegetation clearing will occur. Increased use and trail maintenance will keep vegetation from encroaching on the trail tread. For the entire trail this would amount to less than an acre.

There is the potential for increased use around Rabbit Lake. As this is the only area where water accumulates it will probably attract people who use the trail.

Alternative 2b would allow the trail to be used for horse riding. Horse hooves put greater bearing pressure on the trail surface than hikers do. This could lower the trail surface and create a low track on the trail that would carry runoff water on sites where trail material loose. This could create an erosive situation if drainage problems were to develop over time. However it is anticipated that no sediment would reach the stream network.

There would be no anticipated additional cumulative effects to the watershed in terms of stream water quality and quantity changes.

2. Resource: Vegetation / Port-Orford Cedar

a. Affected Environment

The vegetation in the vicinity of Rabbit Lake is a Late-successional forest with a unique assemblage of plant species. The RNA lacks a complete vegetation map, however during 1999, the area along the proposed trail in section 6 was visited. Preliminary classification of the vegetation indicates that the plant community is unlike anything previously observed in the state of Oregon. Some of the vegetation resembles the Port-Orford Cedar-Red fir-Brewer's Spruce/Sadler Oak- Huckleberry Oak association described by Jimerson (1999a) in northern California on the Six Rivers and Klamath National Forests. However, the vegetation in the Rabbit Lake area includes Alaska-Yellow cedar which was not seen in California. The California plant community is a relatively rare one as it is known to occur on only 197 acres in the range of Port-Orford cedar. Unlike this site, this plant community has never been mapped further than 30 miles from the ocean.

A second plant community was more difficult to classify as the observed species do not easily fit into a previously described plant association. The forest community present has elements of the Port-Orford Cedar-Red fir-Brewer's Spruce/Sadler Oak-Huckleberry Oak association with Alaska-Yellow cedar described above and Port-Orford Cedar-Shasta Red Fir /Sadler Oak-Thin- Leaved Huckleberry association also described by Jimerson (1999b).

Port-Orford cedar in the area that the trail reconstructed would go through has been tested for resistance

to *Phytophthora lateralis*, the pathogen that causes Port-Orford cedar root disease. Thirty-two individual trees were tested. Nineteen are now in a breeding program for resistance to the pathogen (59%). This is the highest percentage of resistance observed in any one sample in the range of POC. In addition, 3 trees in the area exhibit attributes of both POC and Alaska-Yellow cedar to a degree that the species identification cannot be done in the field. Samples of these 3 trees are currently undergoing DNA testing to determine if natural hybridization of Alaska-Yellow cedar and Port-Orford cedar is occurring in the RNA.

b. Environmental consequences

1) Alternative 1: No Action

Potential for *Phytophthora lateralis* to infest the RNA would remain at current low level. A small potential exists for importation of Port-Orford cedar root disease into the RNA. The pathogen could be imported in mud adhering to vehicles using BLM road # 39-6-9. Potential also exists for pathogen importation via horses hooves or even through foot traffic of hikers and other recreationists.

2) Alternative 2: Proposed Action Alternatives

The proposed action would have no impacts on the unique nature of the vegetation present or the values the RNA was established to preserve, unless it were to be a contributor to the introduction of *Phytophthora lateralis* into the area.

Increased recreation use could increase the potential for *Phytophthora lateralis* introduction. Alternative 2a would have the least chance of importation of root disease into the RNA simply due to a lower potential for the importation of infested soil less (Alt a - hiking only *vs*. Alt b - hiking and horseback riding). During wet weather, the important carriers are elk, cattle, and machines. Based on the findings of Zobel, hiking boots could pose a hazard, however, the risk is low. (Zobel et al 1985). Alternative 2b has a slightly higher chance of bringing in root disease due to the use of horses. Its subsequent threat to the forested plant communities the RNA contains is less.

The potential for root disease to be brought into the RNA may actually decrease as public awareness of the situation increases and the biological value of the RNA better known.

3. Resource: Botany (special status species)

a. Affected Environment

This portion of the Kerby Peak Trail (from the south end to Rabbit Lake) was surveyed for special status vascular plants in July 1999. The remainder will be surveyed in July 2000. Non-vascular plants (lichens and bryophytes) will also be surveyed in July 2000. The habitat for spring fungi is not present due to snow cover during the spring season. If fall fruiting S&M fungi habitat is found during the summer 2000 surveys, surveys will be conducted in fall 2000 when weather conditions are suitable.

The botanical environment of this portion on the Kerby Peak trail is representative of the sub-alpine ecosystem of the Siskiyou mountains. This ecosystem is encountered only on the highest portions of the

mountain range. Kerby Peak is situated along a high elevation backbone between the Deer Creek and Williams watersheds. It is one of the highest peaks found in this portion of the Siskiyous. Elevation runs from approximately 4,600' to 5,545' on the peak itself.

The portion of the trail through that part of the Brewer Spruce Research Natural Area (RNA) that includes Rabbit Lake, a very unique sub-alpine pond. Such ponds or lakes are extremely infrequent in the Siskiyou mountains, especially ones that have experienced little impact from anthropogenic sources. Shoreline vegetation and surrounding wetlands are relatively untouched and provide a high quality, highly diverse example of sub-alpine wetland species.

Even more unique is the conifer vegetation found along the trail. Eleven species of conifers occur along the trail and include: white fir, red fir, noble fir, sugar pine, western white pine, common juniper, ponderosa pine, pacific yew and Douglas-fir. The paleoendemic species, Brewer Spruce (*Picea breweri)*, is found frequently, especially around Rabbit Lake. A paleoendemic is a species that has survived as a relict from past geologic times and is found only in a localized ecoregion, in this case the Klamath-Siskiyou ecoregion. Even more rare is the Alaska yellow cedar *(Chamaecyperis lawsoniana)*. The stunted specimens of this species occur along the higher, rocky portions of the trail. More robust specimens occur along Rabbit Lake.

Shrub species richness is also high along the trail. Twenty-one species of shrubs have been identified including mountain ash, rhododendron, rock spirea, mountain heather and thin leaved huckleberry. Sadler oak (*Quercus sadleriana)*, also a paleoendemic, occurs along the trail.

The rocky, mountainous portion of the trail hosts a wide variety of sub-alpine flora, little represented on the Medford District. The Bureau Sensitive species *Saxifragopsis fragarioides* was found on the Forest Service portions of the trail above tree line in T39S, R7W Section 7 and may be present on adjacent BLM land. During July 2000, this species will be more accurately surveyed for its extent, population density and associated species.

b. Environmental Consequences

1. Alternative 1: No Action

Under the No Action alternative, no new effects would occur to the Bureau Sensitive species or to the unique sub-alpine vegetation along the trail. No new impacts would occur to the wetlands or lakeshore vegetation at Rabbit Lake.

Use of the Brewer Spruce RNA for educational or research purposes would continue to be limited due to the difficulty of access to the Rabbit Lake area. Currently, the area is quite inaccessible due to road conditions and shrubby vegetation along the old trail. The old trail is currently listed as a hiking option in the publication, "90 Best Day-hikes" by Art Bernstein. The way the route to Rabbit Lake is described, replete with discussion on machete use, it could have an adverse effect on the diverse shrub vegetation of the RNA. Use of the area would no doubt remain low due to the condition of the trail and also of the poor condition of the BLM access road.

2. Alternative 2: Proposed Action

The proposed action will result in improved access to the area without requiring road improvements, the continued use of road # 39-6-9 and without impacting the shrub diversity of the RNA. The trail will pass directly adjacent to the Bureau Sensitive species, *Saxifragopsis fragarioides*, however. This showy flower could get picked by trail users to the detriment of the local reproductive success of the species.

Alternative 2b allows for horse use on this portion of the Kerby Peak trail where it currently does not occur. Packstock use could have a negative effect on vegetation in the RNA from trampling which could be particularly detrimental around Rabbit Lake. The documentation of trampling effects on vegetation has been a field of research for over ten years. Such publications as Mazzu (1987), Hammitt and Cole (1987) point to such effects as reduction in vegetative cover from gouging, soil compaction, and reduction in species diversity. Also, introduction of noxious weeds could occur, but this impact is lessened by the high altitude of the area. The Interagency Source Book for Natural Area Coordinators (1990) recommends prohibiting packstock use in RNAs and if that is not possible, to prohibit grazing and overnight use.

Proposed Mitigating Measure #1: If alternative 2b is selected (horses allowed on the trail), prohibit packstock on the spur trail down to Rabbit Lake. This will protect the most sensitive area of the RNA and reduce impacts around the lake.

4. Resource: Wildlife (special status, S&M species and their habitats)

a. Introduction

As of this date, surveys have not been completed for those Special status species, S&M species that might be affected by the proposed action. Potential habitat for these species does exist throughout the proposal area. The following discussion of potential impacts on these species is based on alteration of potential habitat which will be assumed to be occupied. It is improbable that all areas identified as potential habitat will prove to be occupied. The actual effects will be equal to or less to those identified.

The land within the project area provides potential habitat for a number of sensitive species including Northern Spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis caurina*), Peregrine falcon *(Falco peregrinus)*, Red tree vole (*Phenacomys longicaudus*), Tail dropper slugs *(Prophysaon spp.*), Del Norte Salamanders (*Plethodon elongatus*), Goshawks (*Accipiter gentilis*), and other raptors as well as all five of the bat species identified as buffer species.

2. Environmental consequences to habitats

a) Alternative 1: No Action

There are several habitats in the action area including high elevation forest, ceanothus dominated brush fields, cliffs and a high elevation pond. Under the “No action” alternative the trail would not be built. The two existing portions of the trail would not be linked up. Existing successional trends in vegetation would continue. The area would continue to have little visitation from humans and would remain relatively remote. No species listed under the Endangered Species Act will be affected.

b) Alternative 2: Proposed Action

No species listed under the Endangered Species Act would be affected by this alternative.

The proposed trail reconstruction would have minimal effect to previously identified habitats except the cliffs and the high elevation pond where the effects would stem from the anticipated increased human visitation. The cliff faces have potential habitat for the Peregrine Falcon, a State of Oregon Endangered species and Bureau Sensitive species. These sites have been sporadically monitored for peregrines over the past several years however, nesting birds have never been located. If in the future the site does become occupied, the trail would allow for greater access into the area possibly leading to disturbance.

Proposed Mitigating Measure #2: Survey the Peregrine habitat prior to construction. If the site is occupied by Peregrine falcons, prohibit construction work during the period January 1 to July 15. If the site becomes occupied prepare a site management plan. Management recommendations would consider the potential for restricting use to outside the January 1 to July 15 period in order to minimize potential human disturbance.

Rabbit Lake is a pond accessed by the historic trail but appears to currently get very little visitation because the trail is currently in poor shape for most of the route and is becoming increasingly hard to follow. Rabbit Lake is a small melt pond which receives the majority of water from snow and rain. A spring is located along the southwest shore however, it contributes very little water to the pond. Except for occasional summer rains the pond has no source of replenishment during the dry season. Construction of the trail could lead to greater human use of the area which could result in fouling of the water, trampling of shore vegetation and temporarily displacing wildlife species that use the pool as habitat as well as a source of drinking water.

3. Environmental consequences to species

a. Alternative 1: No Action

Species that occur within the proposed action area would remain undisturbed. Current trends in populations would remain the same.

b. Alternative 2: Proposed Action

The proposed action has the potential for both habitat modification and disturbance. Habitat modifications comes through removing or changing habitat. Surveys will be conducted for Del Norte salamanders (*Plethodon elongatus*). If located, the trail will be rerouted to avoid any disturbance to the species. The proposed trail is not anticipated to change the overall ecological conditions of surrounded habitats. Mollusks, which depend on forest as a whole, will not be disturbed by the proposed project.

The primary affect of the trail will be the potential increase in human activity in areas that currently receive little visitation. The ridge line and associated forest, pond, cliffs and shrub habitats will be subjected to increased disturbance. The degree of disturbance will depend on frequency and magnitude of visitation. It is anticipated that the trail will receive “light” weekend use. In addition the rough terrain and brush will limit the amount of people going “off trail”. Therefore the majority of disturbance will be within the general vicinity of the trail. It is not anticipated that the amount of disturbance will

have an overall affect on population of any animals in the local area.

It is anticipated that no species listed under the Endangered Species Act will be affected by the Action Alternative.

5. Resource: Recreation/Cultural

a. Affected Environment

The proposed trail passes through a research natural area and an Instant Wilderness Study area. It is a high elevation site with Brewer spruce, Alaska Yellow Cedar, Port-Orford Cedar. The proposed trail follows the route of a historic trail along the ridgeline from Kerby Peak to Holcomb Peak. The area is remote, with access from Deer Creek Road near Selma and off Holcomb Peak, north of highway 46, near Cave Junction. Recreational use of the area is currently light. The Williams - Selma Backcountry Byway is the access route to the trailhead and will provide a recreation opportunity along the byway.

Currently, access to the trail is being advertised in a hiking guide. The advertised route guides people up a steep, rocky slope along a route that is not well marked, and creates potential safety and increased impact issues.

There are no known cultural sites along the proposed route.

b. Environmental effects

1) Alternative 1: No Action

In the no action alternative, recreational use would continue to be light, with no trail development. User impacts would be dispersed throughout the area with multiple undesignated trails continuing to be created and brushed, rather than concentrated along a single trail. Safety would continue to be a concern, as users would be traveling along steep, unmarked routes into the area.

2) Alternative 2: Proposed Action

Effects common to alternatives 2a and 2b include concentrating use along a ridgeline trail system, rather than multiple trails being created in the area. According to Hammitt and Cole, 1987, trail construction is a good example of use concentration that serves to avoid the creation of numerous user-created trails criss-crossing the landscape. This concentration of use will also limit safety hazards by providing a designated trail along a ridgeline, rather that allowing for multiple trails to be built and brushed in steep terrain, where hikers could get lost or injured. Interpretive panels at the trailhead would assist in informing visitors of low impact hiking techniques.

In alternative 2a, hiking opportunities would be provided along the historic ridgeline trail. This recreation opportunity would provide access into some of the most unique high elevation habitat in the area, with the opportunity for interpretation of the unique features of the area. Impacts to the trail tread by hikers would be minimal. Impacts to the Rabbit Lake area could be increased trampling around the lake.

In alternative 2b, the area would be open to horses and hikers, providing a multiple use trail. Impacts to the trail tread would be slightly greater with horse use. Trampling around Rabbit Lake would be greater with horse use than just hiking use.

The reconstruction of the trail on the ridgeline to Rabbit Lake will provide a safer route which will also be less impacting than multiple routes into the area. Reconstruction of the trail will concentrate impacts along the trail.

The proposed alternatives would not impact the wilderness character of the ISA.

Chapter 4
Agencies and Persons Consulted

A. Agencies and Persons Consulted

All input was considered by the planning and ID teams in developing the project proposal and in preparing this EA. Personnel from multiple agencies were consulted prior to preparation of this proposal:

US Forest Service, Illinois Valley Ranger District
State of Oregon Forestry Department
Illinois Valley Community Response Team
Dr. Richard Sniezko, Dorena Genetics Resource Center, Dorena, OR.

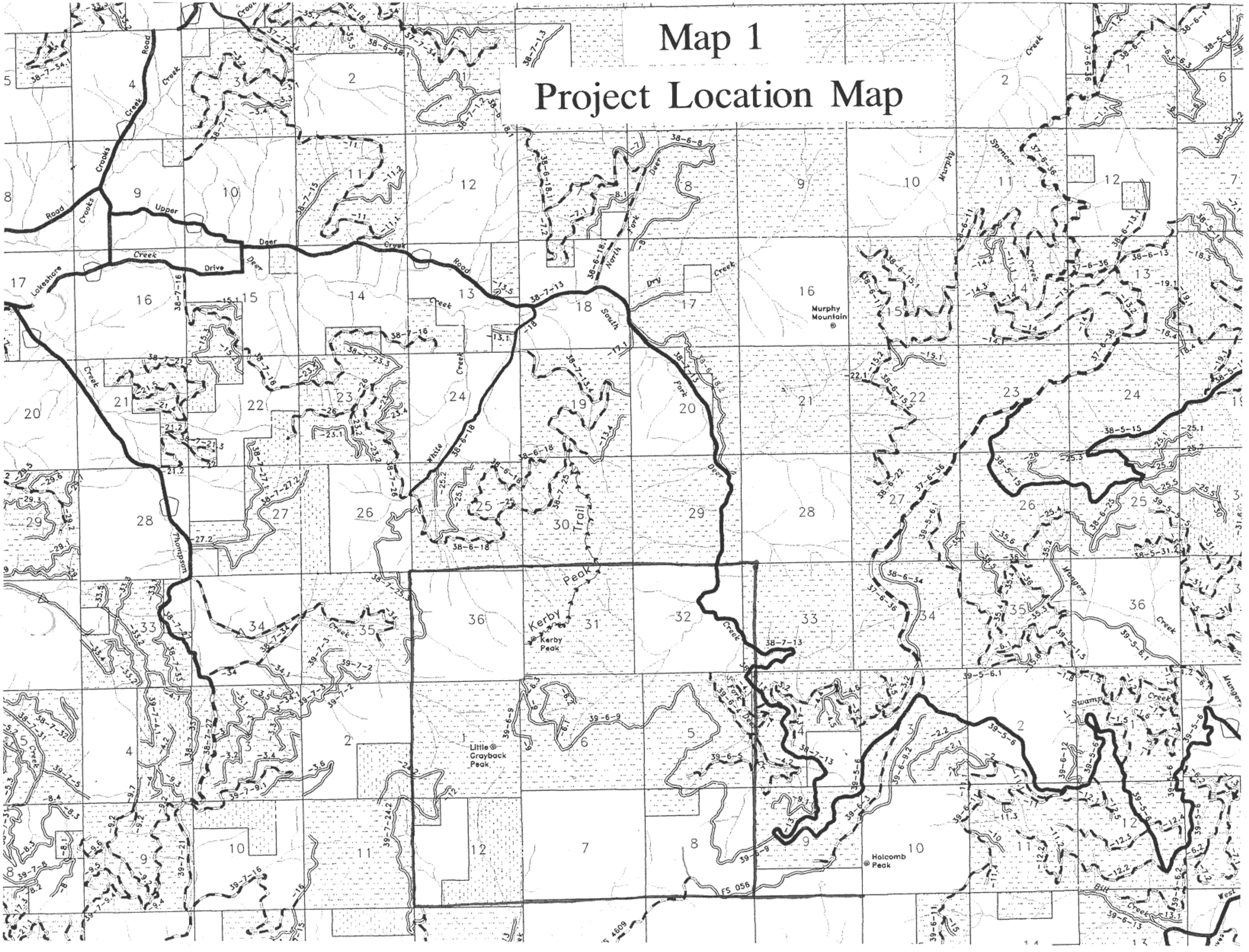
B. Availability of Document and Comment Procedures

Copies of the EA document will be available for formal public review in the BLM Medford District Office. A formal 15 day public comment period will be held following an announcement in the Grants Pass Courier.

Appendix A
Project Maps

Map 1

Project Location Map



Map 2 Proposed Action

Kerby Peak Trail System

R7W

R6W

T 38 S

T 39 S

Kerby Peak

Deer Creek

Paradise Mine No.2

Paradise Mine No.1

Rd. 39-6-6.2

Rd. 39-6-9

BLM-LSR

BLM-LSR

BLM-LSR

Rabbit Lake

Little Grayback Peak

USFS-Matrix

USFS-Matrix

FS Road 054

FS Road 056

Rd. 39-6-9

Borrow Pit

Holcomb Peak

State Land

Proposed Trail

Existing Trail

Brewer Spruce RNA/ISA (BLM)

Brewer Spruce RNA Enlargement (BLM)

N

Appendix B
Issues Considered but Eliminated From Detailed Analysis

1. Motorized use and mechanized trail building equipment were considered but eliminated because the trail is encompassed by a Research Natural Area and an Instant Study Area for wilderness. Motorized use is not allowed in the ISAs. (USDI BLM, 1995)

2. Allowing overnight camping in the RNA was considered but eliminated from analysis because the Natural Area guidelines recommend that there be no camping in RNAs. According to the BLM Manual, camping is not compatible with maintenance of key RNA values, which are scientific and educational in nature. (USDI BLM Manual, 1987)

Appendix C:
Potential Monitoring

1. Erosion and Water quality monitoring: For the first five years after trail completion annually monitor the trail for: 1) Surface effects of use on the trail, 2) Trampling and other damage to the wetland on the edge of Rabbit Lake, 3) Contamination of Rabbit Lake (e.g., changes of nitrate levels, fecal coloform bacteria, and visual assessments of water conditions). Begin monitoring before the trail is constructed to provide baseline data.

2) *Port-Orford cedar monitoring*: Annually monitor the trail to determine if Port-Orford Cedar root disease is present. Monitor after the onset of moisture stress (after July 15th).

Appendix D
References Cited

Hammitt, William and Cole, David. 1987. Wildland Recreation. Ecology and Management.

Jimerson, Thomas M. 1999. A Supplement to Port Orford Cedar Plant Associations in Northwest California [in press], U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Region, Six Rivers National Forest, Eureka, CA 95501.

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Zobel, Donald B.; Roth, Lewis F.; Hawk, Glenn M. Ecology, pathology, and management of Port-Orford-cedar (*Chamaecyparis lawsoniana*). Gen. Tech. Rep. PNW-184. Portland, OR: U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Forest Service, Pacific Northwest Forest and Range Experiment Station; 1985. 161 p.