



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
MEDFORD DISTRICT OFFICE
3040 BIDDLE ROAD
MEDFORD, OREGON 97504

DECISION RECORD/RATIONALE/FONSI
Grayback Mountain Trail Construction - Phase 2b & 3
(EA # OR110-03-18)

I. DECISION

The decision is to implement the proposed action for Phase 2b and 3 of the Grayback Mountain Trail Construction project as described in its environmental assessment (EA). Implementation of this decision will include all project design features as described in the EA. As noted in the proposal, this trail will be open to hiking and equestrian use and closed to bicycle and motorized use.

II. RATIONALE

This project implements in part the Medford District Resource Management Plan (RMP). The Grayback Mountain Trail was identified in the RMP as one of 16 trails to be developed to provide recreational opportunities on BLM administered lands (RMP p. 65). This new trail segment will finalize construction of the Grayback Mountain Trail and will connect the Williams Valley to more than 2,500 miles of regional trail systems (Boundary Trail, Red Buttes Trail, and Pacific Crest Trail).

This action incorporates project design features which minimize potential short and long term adverse effects of the actions to be implemented. No adverse cumulative effects have been identified.

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

For this phase of the trail project, four comment letters were received, three of which expressed support for the project and for maintaining the trail for non-motorized use only. However, the Motorcycle Riders Association comment letter (in addition to approximately 600 signatures and 440 attached form letters) requested that the Grayback Trail be opened to off-highway vehicle (OHV) use. However, the Medford District RMP prohibits motorized use in the project area. Furthermore, motorized use would not be appropriate due to the following reasons:

- 1) The trail is within the East IV / Williams Late Successional Reserve. The RMP (p. 67) limits OHV use in LSRs to designated roads.
- 2) The trail will pass through the Grayback Glades Research Natural Area (RNA); RNAs are closed to motorized use (RMP p. 67).

- 3) The trail is within a watershed infected by Port-Orford cedar (POC) root disease. The RMP (p. 66) limits OHV use to designated roads in areas affected by POC root disease.
- 4) Erodible granitic soils and steep slopes would require extensive site disturbance for the trail to accommodate OHV use. Furthermore, OHV use would exacerbate erosion in these erosion-prone soils.
- 5) The trail passes through northern spotted owl critical habitat, thus requiring that noise above ambient levels be restricted between March 1 and June 15 within ¼ mile of active nest sites or unsurveyed suitable habitat. Therefore, annual review and surveys would be required if motorized use were allowed.
- 6) The trail also passes through *Cypripedium* habitat and is adjacent to an existing population. Motorized use could disturb the soil and duff layer in the vicinity of the Survey and Manage species.

This decision is consistent with the *Medford District Resource Management Plan*, 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 Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines*. This decision is also consistent with the Endangered Species Act; the Native American Religious Freedom Act; other cultural resource management laws and regulations; Executive Order 12898 regarding Environmental Justice; and Executive Order 13212 regarding potential adverse impacts to energy development, production, supply and/or distribution.

The project is consistent with and promotes the goals of the RMP by pursuing “recreation opportunities that will benefit local community economic strategies consistent with BLM land use objectives” (RMP p. 63). This project is also consistent with the Bureau of Land Management’s Strategic Plan for FY2000-2005, specifically mission goal 1.1 which is to “Provide opportunities for environmentally responsible recreation.”

III. FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Based on information contained in the EA, the project’s record, and on comments received to date from the public regarding the project, it is my determination that the proposed action will not result in significant impacts to the quality of the human environment. During scoping and the public comment period, those who commented shared their preferences on how to implement the project or proposed additional objectives, but no new impacts were brought to light that would indicate a need for further analysis. This project does not constitute a major federal action having a significant effect on the human environment. An environmental impact statement (EIS) is not necessary and will not be prepared.

This conclusion is also based on a consideration of both the context and intensity of the impacts of the selected action(s) (40 CFR 1508.27). **Context** refers to analysis of environmental consequences at various social or geographic scales. For this project, impacts were assessed at both the site-specific and 5th field watershed scales. **Intensity** refers to the severity of impacts. Conclusions regarding intensity are supported by the following findings:

- 1) *Impacts can be both beneficial and adverse and a significant effect may exist regardless of the perceived balance of effects.* Both adverse and beneficial impacts will result from the project. Both have

been considered in concluding that there will be no impacts at the 5th field watershed scale and inconsequential impacts at the site-specific scale for the following issues (resources not mentioned are expected to have no impacts at any scale): soil compaction, erosion, sedimentation, noxious weed dispersal, wildfire hazard, RNA impacts and wildlife disturbance.

2) *The degree of the impact on public health or safety.* No adverse effects to public health or safety have been identified. Well marked, maintained trails that replace unauthorized, unmarked poorly maintained trails benefit public safety.

3) *Unique characteristics of the geographic area.* The trail will pass through a portion of the Grayback Glades RNA, a unique botanical area. The trail will also provide high elevation access to more than 2,500 miles of trails, including the Pacific Crest Trail.

4) *The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.* There is no indication of any highly controversial effects on the quality of the human environment.

5) *The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are likely to be highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.* There is no indication that the effects on the human environment are highly uncertain and/or involve unique or unknown risks.

6) *The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.* The action is not precedent setting. Trail building and improvement is a common and frequent activity.

7) *Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.* There is no indication that the actions will appreciably contribute to any cumulative impacts at the site-specific or watershed scale.

8) *The degree to which the action may adversely affect National Historic Register listed or eligible to be listed sites or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural or historical resources.* There is no indication that the action will cause loss or destruction of any scientific, cultural, or historical resources.

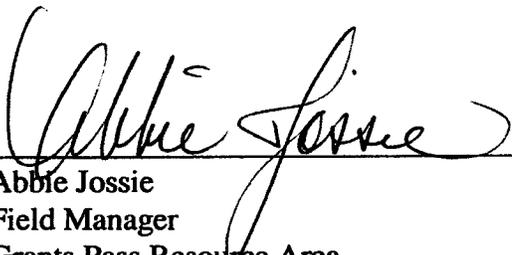
9) *The degree to which the action may adversely affect ESA listed species or critical habitat.* Any adverse impacts to ESA listed species or ESA identified critical habitat will be localized, short term and negligible due to project design features which will ameliorate any adverse effects to the nearby northern spotted owl nest site.

10) *Whether the action threatens a violation of environmental protection law or requirements.* There are no indications that the action will violate any environmental protection law or requirement.

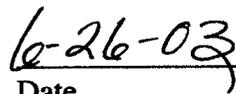
IV. ADMINISTRATIVE REMEDIES

This decision is a forest management decision. Administrative remedies are available to those who believe they will be adversely affected by this decision. Administrative recourse is available in accordance with BLM regulation and must follow the procedures and requirements described in 43 CFR 5003, Administrative Remedies.

In accordance with BLM Forest Management Regulation 43 CFR 5003.2 (a, c), the effective date of the decision will be the date of publication of the Notice of Decision and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) in the Grants Pass Daily Courier. Publication of this notice will establish the date initiating the protest period provided for in accordance with 43 CFR 5003.3. While similar notices may be published in other newspapers, the date of publication in the Grants Pass Daily Courier will prevail as the effective date of this decision. Any contest of this decision should state specifically what portion or element of the decision is being protested and cite the applicable CFR regulations.



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Date