

DECISION MEMO
SURVEYORS RIDGE TRAIL RE-ROUTE
U.S. FOREST SERVICE
MT. HOOD NATIONAL FOREST
BARLOW RANGER DISTRICT
HOOD RIVER COUNTY, OREGON

BACKGROUND

A segment of the Surveyors Ridge Trail #688 will be impacted by the City of The Dalles Pipeline replacement. The pipeline providing water to the City of The Dalles is antiquated and needs to be replaced with a modern pipeline. A portion of the pipeline is adjacent to or beneath the Surveyors Ridge Trail. The pipeline replacement will permanently change the trail corridor in these locations. In order to maintain a modern pipeline, the corridor will be widened to 25 feet and aggregate will be placed along the right-of-way.

Re-routing the trail where it follows the pipeline will maintain a semi-primitive trail experience for trail users. This project would also disperse non-motorized recreationists within the trail system, and keep recreationists off of the road system. This will improve interconnectivity of trails in the vicinity by connecting with the Super Connector and provide a short loop for young people and recreationists who want a shorter trail experience than Surveyors Ridge. One of the material staging areas for the pipeline project would be converted to a trailhead to provide a more centralized parking area for the trails off of Forest Road 44 and a safer location for parking.

DESCRIPTION OF DECISION

It is my decision to authorize the rerouting of approximately 3 miles of the existing Surveyors Ridge Trail #688 where it follows the Dalles Pipeline. The north end of the reroute would provide a short loop approximately .7 miles in length for non-motorized recreationists looking for a short distance trail opportunity. The reroute would also connect Surveyors Ridge Trail directly to the Super Connector. The area that will be used for staging for reconstruction of the pipeline would become a trailhead 1.5 acres in size. The trailhead would provide needed centralized parking for the trail system in the vicinity of Forest Road 44.

The existing Surveyors Ridge Trailhead would remain accessible; however, this trailhead is inadequate for the amount of use it receives. The new trailhead would be large enough to accommodate the amount of use the trail system receives. The segment of Surveyors Ridge Trail #688 that would be impacted by the pipeline replacement would remain open to non-motorized travel, although it would not provide the same semi-primitive experience it now provides.

Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species

Fish- There are federally listed as Threatened LCR and MCR steelhead trout, LCR coho salmon, and LCR chinook salmon and their critical habitat area present in the Dog River and North Fork Mill – South Fork Mill Creek 6th field subwatersheds, but their upper limits are outside of the area of influence of the proposed project under this CE.

Region 6 Forester's Special Status Aquatic species listed as Sensitive coastal cutthroat trout are present in Brooks Meadow Creek, and their upper limits is at FS road 1700 culvert crossing. The proposed trail crossing would occur above the outlet of the FS road 1700 culvert (road bed shoulder fill). As long as Hydrology PDC's/BMP's are followed, negligible fine sediment is expected to reach the Brooks Meadow Creek for both the short and long-term. Loss of stream channel shade from construction and use of the trail for both the short and long-term would be negligible as a result of limbing or removing a small line of the sapling trees located on the FS road 1700 shoulder fill. This is due to the vegetation location to be removed is on the east and southeastern face of the stream channel, and a multiple layered canopy will remain in place between the new trail location and the outlet of the FS road 1700 culvert, and the multi layered stand of trees located on the north face of the crossing culvert outlet will be left untouched from the proposed activities. There are no other stream crossings or spring/seep areas know to be present within the influence of the new proposed trail reroute. Following the Hydrology PDC's/BMP's should minimize the potential of fine sediment reaching Brooks Meadow Creek, but there is still the potential for fine sediment to reach Brooks Meadow Creek during high rain or snow melt runoff events. These events are expected to be seldom in occurrence and short lived. When they do occur the resident cutthroat in Brooks Meadow Creek may alter their feeding behavior due to slightly higher then natural water turbidity levels while the high rain or snow melt runoff events occur.

Negligible impacts from fine sediment to the resident cutthroat trout spawning and rearing habitat in Brooks Meadow Creek is expected to occur for short or long-term. Due to the potential of temporary short lived pulses of fine sediment into Brooks Meadow Creek a determination of "**MIIH**" **May Impact Individual and Individual Habitat** for coastal cutthroat trout is warranted. Due to proximity of LCR and MCR steelhead trout, LCR Coho salmon, and LCR Chinook salmon and their critical habitat a determination of "**NA**" **No Affect** is warranted.

Surveys have been conducted several times in the area during 2010, 2013, and 2015 (samples collected and identified as non S&M species). No Survey and Manage species were found during the surveys.

Wildlife – There will be No Effect to any threatened or endangered species as a result of this trail re-route. There will be no impact to sensitive or management indicator species.

Plants – The project will have No Effect to any threatened, endangered, or R6 Sensitive plant species.

Flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds – The project does not propose to occupy or modify any floodplains or wetlands. Therefore, implementation of this project is consistent with Executive Order 11988 and 11990. The portion of the trail that includes the proposed loop and the section of trail to the north is located within the City of the Dalles Watershed.

Congressionally designated areas such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or national recreation areas – The authorized locations for occupancy are not within designated wilderness, wilderness study areas, or national recreation areas.

Inventoried roadless areas or potential wilderness areas – There are no inventoried roadless areas or areas suitable for wilderness designation within the project area.

Research natural areas – There are no Research Natural Areas within the project area.

American Indians and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites – A survey was conducted for cultural resources. The survey was conducted in a manner deemed adequate to discover cultural materials. No heritage resources were observed or documented as a result of the survey for this project. This project can proceed as planned with **no effect** to heritage resources (Stipulation III(B)5).

The mere presence of one or more of these resource conditions does not preclude use of a categorical exclusion (CE). It is the existence of a cause-effect relationship between a proposed action and the potential effect on these resource conditions and if such a relationship exists, the degree of the potential effect of a proposed action on these resource conditions that determine whether extraordinary circumstances exist. (36 CFR 220.6(b)(2))

APPLICABLE CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION

I have concluded that this decision is appropriately categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement or environmental assessment as it is a routine activity within a categorical exclusion and there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the decision that may result in a significant individual or cumulative effect on the quality of the human environment. This action may be excluded from documentation in an EA or EIS because it falls within 36 CFR 220.6 which is identified in Forest Service Handbook, 1909.15, Chapter 30.

RESOURCE PROTECTION MEASURES

The following management requirements are applied to the proposed action:

General Protection Measures:

- Maintain trail at least 100 feet away from the stream channel to the extent practicable since the trail will have to cross the stream and will obviously be within 100 feet of the stream on the approaches to the existing culvert crossing. Design/construct the trail to cross the stream perpendicularly to the extent practicable.

- For areas where the trail is within 60 feet of the stream channel, maintain as much shade as is practicable.
- During construction of the trail sections that are within 100 feet of the stream, utilize erosion control measures, such as coir logs, to prevent sediment delivery to the stream.
- Provide adequate drainage on the trail to ensure that it is hydrologically disconnected from the stream. This includes constructing drainage prior to the approaches to the stream crossing that drain to a vegetated buffer prior to entering the stream channel.
- All gravel, rock, or soil used to construct this trail must come from a weed-free source approved by an FS botanist or invasive species specialist. Any heavy equipment used to construct the trail must be washed to remove potential weed seeds and fragments before being brought onto the National Forest.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

This project was entered into the PALS database and listed on-line in the Mt. Hood National Forest Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA). Information on this project was posted on the Mt. Hood National Forests website at the following link:

http://data.ecosystem-management.org/nepaweb/nepa_projects_exp.php?projects=49414

A scoping notice inviting the public to comment on the Surveyors Trail Re-route project was sent to interested parties on the Eastside planning mailing list. The district received five written comments. Generally the commenters were supportive of the project. Pertinent comments and their responses are listed below.

“We urge the Forest Service to consider an alternative that continues to co-locate the trail with the pipeline right-of-way while "beautifying" the trail corridor by re-planting the margins of the right-of-way with native vegetation (groundcover). The wider trail corridor could also help facilitate shared use the trail by hikers and bikers.”

Response: Keeping the trail within the pipeline right of way was considered, however local user groups expressed concern about losing the semi-primitive recreation experience, and user conflicts with pipeline maintenance trucks.

“We would like to know more about what type of facilities you envision at the trailhead and would like to suggest restrooms, a covered picnic table area and trailhead/map board. Is it possible to include improvements like these in the planning of the trailhead development?”

Response: At this time, I am not approving any other changes to the trail system except for the trail re-route, and the larger area for trailhead parking. Other improvements may be considered as funding opportunities become available.

FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS AND REGULATIONS

This decision is consistent with the Mt. Hood National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) (1990) as amended. The project was designed in conformance with the LRMP standards and guidelines for C1 Timber Emphasis and B2 Scenic Views management areas.

Northwest Forest Plan Consistency- This decision is consistent with the NWFP ROD (1994). The activities would not retard or prevent attainment of the 9 Aquatic Conservation Strategy Objectives of the Northwest Forest Plan. By utilizing the existing culvert crossing and maintaining the trail at least 100 feet from the stream, except adjacent to the crossing, this project will not prevent attainment of the ACS objectives.

The proposed action, with mitigation measures, complies with current forest and regional direction regarding the introduction, control, and spread of invasive species, including noxious weeds. Mitigation measures included in this decision will be implemented to control known populations of weeds.

Clean Water Act – There would be no effects to any Oregon Department of Environmental Quality list of water quality impaired water bodies (303(d) list). The project will not degrade or improve water in the area. Therefore, there would be no measurable impact on water quality. This project complies with the Clean Water Act as there would be no effects to any Oregon Department of Environmental Quality list of water quality impaired water bodies (303(d) list).

Clean Air Act – There would be no measurable impact on air quality.

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW (APPEAL) OPPORTUNITIES

This decision is not subject to appeal or objection pursuant to 36 CFR 218. On January 17, 2014, the President signed into law the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2014 (Pub. L. No. 113-76). Section 431 of that Act directs that the 1992 and 2012 legislation establishing the 36 CFR 215 (post-decisional appeals) and 36 CFR 218 (pre-decisional objections) processes “shall not apply to any project or activity implementing a land and resource management plan ... that is categorically excluded ... under the National Environmental Policy Act [NEPA].” On February 7, 2014, the President signed into law the Agricultural Act of 2014 (Farm Bill) (Pub. L. No. 113-79). Section 8006 of the 2014 Farm Bill repealed the Appeals Reform Act (ARA) (Pub. L. No. 102-381). The ARA’s implementing regulation was 36 CFR 215. The 2014 Farm Bill also directs that the pre-decisional objection process established in the Consolidated Appropriation Act of 2012 shall not be applicable to categorically excluded projects or activities.

CONTACT

For additional information concerning this decision, contact either Claire Pitner, Recreation Specialist, by telephone at (541) 352-1248 or by e-mail at cpitner@fs.fed.us.

SIGNATURE OF DECIDING OFFICER*/s/Kameron C. Sam**July 18, 2016*

KAMERON C. SAM

Date

District Ranger, Barlow Ranger District

USDA NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY STATEMENT

[DR 4300.003 USDA Equal Opportunity Public Notification Policy \(June 2, 2015\)](#)

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Surveyors Ridge Trail Reroute

