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Date: March 3, 2008

The Hungry Horse and Glacier View Ranger Districts are seeking public input on a project specific planning effort that restricts and designates wheeled motorized travel in the following areas: 1) Cedar Flats north of Columbia Falls; 2) Hungry Horse Track; 3) FK&L trails adjacent to Emery Bay Campground; 4) access roads and areas to Hungry Horse Reservoir; and 5) access roads and areas to the North Fork and Middle Fork of the Flathead River.

These specific areas were identified as potential changes to our existing open motorized transportation system across the two ranger districts. The existing situation was displayed to the public at a recent open house where we held discussions related to the implementation of a national rule regarding travel management and off-highway vehicles. This map is also currently on display at our Flathead National Forest internet website:

http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/flathead/nepa/travel_management/hh/index.htm

This national rule requires each National Forest to formally designate those roads, trails, and areas where motorized travel is permitted and to display them on a Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM). Under the rule, a MVUM is required to be printed every year and should reflect access management decisions made over the year, if any. At this time, it is our intention to display on this year's MVUM our existing open motorized transportation system and the resulting decision from this analysis as well as any other decisions affecting the motorized transportation system that are completed prior to the production of the map. These potential changes to our existing motorized system are based on our knowledge and experience in these areas, past and ongoing discussions with users of the areas, and reflect collaborative efforts and discussion which occurred at our open house on January 24, 2008.

About 55 people attended the open house and additionally we received 20 letters, emails, other correspondence, phone calls, and visits providing us initial feedback. We heard a range of comments at this forum including the designation of additional roads and trails for motorized use, maintaining the existing use, and prohibiting some of the existing motorized use in various areas (e.g. Swan Crest) across the two districts. There was a general acceptance for the historic areas that provide access to the Hungry Horse Reservoir and the Middle and North Forks of the Flathead River. We also heard some concerns about designating trails in the Cedar Flats area from adjacent private land owners in the area as well as some positive feedback for designating trails in the Cedar Flats, FKL, and Hungry Horse Track areas.

Purpose and Need

The purpose of the site-specific project is to restrict and designate a system of motorized roads, trails and areas that continue to provide access to the Wild and Scenic River Corridor (i.e. North Fork Flathead and Middle Fork Flathead Rivers) and Hungry Horse Reservoir as well as manage



motorized use within the wildland urban interface area adjacent to Columbia Falls and Hungry Horse. In order to meet this purpose and need, we propose the following specific actions:

Proposed Action

Cedar Flats – Restrict and designate approximately 9 miles of existing routes in the Cedar Flats area north of Columbia Falls, including the Bonneville Power Administration Utility corridor, as trails open to vehicles 50 inches wide or less from June 1 through November 30. Two short segments of 1000 and 150 feet would be constructed to connect a couple of the loop systems. Road #10815 would also be changed from an open year long road to seasonally open from June 1 through November 30 with gates. The road, trails and utility corridor combine to create multiple loop options. Designating the same season for both the road and trails (including the utility corridor) would allow for resource protection during the spring months as well as during the winter when freezing and thawing create soft conditions. Prohibiting wheeled vehicle use during the winter allows snowmobiles and skiers unencumbered access in the Cedar Flats area. The routes proposed do not encumber private lands or lead to dead ends. See enclosed map for details.

Hungry Horse Track Area – Restrict and designate approximately 2 miles of existing routes as trails open to vehicles 50 inches wide or less from April 1 through November 30 adjacent to the current designated Hungry Horse Track. The proposal would also limit use on a portion of Road #11090A to vehicles 50 inches wide or less. The proposal would prohibit all motorized travel on Road #11090 which connects to Road #895, Road #11080P and the upper end of #11080T. The track proposal would create a “trail” experience on this system. See enclosed map for details.

FK&L – Restrict and designate approximately 0.3 miles of existing routes as trails open to vehicles 50 inches wide or less adjacent to the dispersed areas known as FK&L on the east side of Hungry Horse Reservoir. See enclosed map for details.

Wild and Scenic River Corridors - Restrict and designate all motorized travel within the Wild and Scenic River corridors for the Middle and North Forks of the Flathead River to system roads, trails, and areas for the purpose of accessing the Wild and Scenic River Corridor. This designation would rescind the 300 foot allowance for dispersed camping within both the Middle Fork and North Fork river corridors. We currently have a 300 foot cross-country travel allowance from a designated road for travel to a campsite as long as no resource damage occurs. See maps posted on http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/flathead/nepa/travel_management/hh/index.htm

Hungry Horse Reservoir – Restrict and designate specific areas below the high water line on Hungry Horse Reservoir to allow for existing access to the reservoir. The 300 foot dispersed camping allowance would still be in effect off all open system roads along the reservoir. See maps posted on http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/flathead/nepa/travel_management/hh/index.htm.

Swan Crest Motorized Trails - Implement a season for all motorized trails along the Swan Crest north of Jewel Basin Hiking Area from July 1 through September 30. These trails are #51, #7 (north from the intersection with Trail #5 to its termini at Trail #51), 295, 52, and 297. This designated season would allow for resource protection during the wet spring and fall seasons.

How to Obtain Map Products

All maps and other products are posted on the Flathead National Forest website in PDF format http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/flathead/nepa/travel_management/hh/index.htm. In addition, CDs are available at the Hungry Horse Ranger Station and the Forest Office located off Wolfpack Way in Kalispell.

Your Input is Requested

For this project specific planning, you are invited to send or phone in any comments, suggestions, or concerns that you have regarding the access changes being proposed on the Hungry Horse and Glacier View Ranger Districts. All comments received to date will also be considered. Please feel free to share this letter with neighbors or other interested parties in the event we have missed somebody. For reference purpose, we have named this project the C.H.R. Motorized Route and Area Designation Project.

Please send written comments to the Hungry Horse and Glacier View Ranger District, P.O. Box 190340, Hungry Horse, MT 59919 (or drop them off at our office – 10 Hungry Horse Drive, Hungry Horse, MT). To submit comments electronically, please send to comments-northern-flathead-hungry-horse-glacier-view@fs.fed.us. You should normally receive an automated electronic acknowledgement from us as confirmation of receipt. If you do not receive an automated acknowledgement of the receipt of comments, it is your responsibility to ensure timely receipt by other means.

In order to be most useful to us, send or phone your comments by March 21, 2008. We anticipate an environmental analysis to be published for the public in the spring and a potential decision on this project to occur sometime this summer.

For further information, please contact Paula Peterson (406-387-3818) or Michele Draggo (406-387-3827).

Thank you for your continuing interest and involvement in this project.

Sincerely,



/s/ JIMMY DEHERRERA
District Ranger

Enclosure (3 maps)