



File Code: 1570-1

Date:

Dear Gallatin Travel Plan Participant:

In the decision on the appeals filed over the Gallatin National Forest Travel Management Plan, Appeal Deciding Officer Kathy McAllister instructed me to clarify some of the rationale I used in making travel management decisions [see McAllister letter, March 20, 2007(i.e. ADO letter)]. The specific topics needing clarification are listed below along with my response. Also, attached is the Gallatin National Forest Travel Plan Implementation Strategy and work planned for 2007.

1. Cabin Creek Wildlife Recreation Management Area.

The ADO letter instructed me to review the ROD and Detailed Description of the Decision (Cabin Creek Travel Area Table pp. 40 and 41) and clarify motorcycle and ATV use.

Response: There were questions on why the Travel Plan decision for the Cabin Creek Travel Planning Area allowed ATV/motorcycle travel on the Red Cub Trail #205 (Seg. 1) and the Skyline Trail #151 (Seg. 1) to December 2nd, whereas other motorcycle trails within this Travel Planning Area close on October 15th. If you look at the map on page II-39 of the Detailed Description of the Decision the Red Cub Trail (Seg. 1) on the west side of the area runs from the Beaver Creek Road to the Cabin Creek Divide. The Skyline Trail (Seg. 1) on the east side of the area runs from the end of the Tepee Creek Road to the Cabin Creek Divide. These two trail segments fall outside of the Cabin Creek Recreation and Wildlife Management Area (CCRWMA). The other trails within this Travel Planning Area fall within the CCRWMA. I extended the fall use period for ATVs on the two trail segments described above to facilitate access to the Cabin Creek Divides from the east and west during the general hunting season (Record of Decision, page 41). From these points hunting within the CCRWMA would be on foot (or on horse). As displayed on page 35 of the Record of Decision (ROD) the October 15th closure date to motorcycles within the CCRWMA is designed to provide for big game habitat security and to prevent user conflicts during the hunting season.

2. Main Boulder Travel Planning Area.

The ADO letter instructed me to review the ROD and Detailed Description of the Decision and explain the rationale for changing the restrictions on the Grouse Creek Trail #14 and the Green Mountain Trail #94.

Response: My rationale for the Grouse Creek Trail #14 is that the motorized opportunities afforded by this trail are limited due to its' length; and that the trail gets a large amount of non-motorized use, primarily foot traffic, to the petroglyphs located adjacent to the trail.



Historically, there is little if any motorized use on the trail now; motorized use on the trail will result in user conflicts with the foot and stock travelers that use the trail heavily to access the petroglyphs.

For the Green Mountain Trail # 94 the rationale is that motorized trail use will conflict with the heavy non-motorized use of the Natural Bridge Scenic Area. There is no motorized use in this area now.

3. Tom Miner Travel Planning Area.

The ADO letter instructed me to review Tom Miner-Rock TPA and provide rationale for the snowmobile use restriction north of the South Rock Creek Road, and rationale for no longer grooming the road for snowmobiles.

Response: The area (acres) within the Wilderness Study Area (WSA) where snowmobiling is to be allowed was configured to match the approximate acres used by snowmobiles pre-1977, and to approximate areas snowmobilers indicated were most desirable to them today. To meet this intent, my Travel Plan decision restricts snowmobile use over 80% of the WSA. The snowmobile use in the area north of Rock Creek South Road was restricted to reduce encroachments from private and National Forest land into the portions of the WSA where snowmobile use is restricted.

The South Rock Creek Road has been groomed in the past from the Forest Service seasonal restriction gate to the WSA boundary; a distance of approximately 1 mile. My Travel Plan decision discontinues this grooming to de-emphasize this area for snowmobiling thus reducing potential impacts on the wilderness character of the WSA. In terms of providing a recreation opportunity I also believed that there was limited utility in grooming just 1 mile of trail. This road remains an access point however to allow for challenge snowmobile riding in a portion of the Gallatin Mountain Range.

4. ROD: Section IX. Implementation.

Instructions: Implementation of the Travel Management Plan will be a process which will be ongoing over many years. Although the FEIS and ROD refer to implementation in numerous places, the overall discussion of how the Plan will be implemented is missing. Prepare a summary which identifies the overall process for implementation of the Travel Management Plan ROD.

Response: Attached is the Gallatin National Forest Travel Plan Implementation Strategy.

5. Access Management.

Access needs, where there are insufficient rights or no existing rights, are identified in Table I-3 Forest Access Objectives in the Detailed Description of the Decision document. As identified in some of the appeals, this has led to concern with adjacent landowners over what rights currently

exist or do not exist. While access rights are a very complicated issue, it would be helpful if the Forest Supervisor identified the process she expects to use to clarify some of the identified access needs. This could be included in the implementation section previously discussed. It would be important to ensure that adjacent landowners are also informed of the process.

Response: The Travel Management Plan for the Gallatin NF (Table I-3, Forest Access Objectives, with Map) identifies specific locations where there is need to acquire additional legal access rights to National Forest System (NFS) lands or to perfect or improve existing access rights to NFS lands. In most cases, the needed access can be provided on an existing road or trail across private or State lands.

The Travel Plan (Table 1-3) includes a description of each specific access need. Each needed access is also categorized and mapped as follows:

- A1 – Additional Public and Administrative Road Access Needed
- A2 – Additional Public Trail and Trailhead Access Needed
- A3 – Additional Administrative Access Needed.

Lack of reasonable access to NFS lands results from historic land ownership patterns (railroad grants, homestead acts, and mining patents), and from changing private land ownership and changing attitudes toward public access through private lands.

Forest Service policy is to acquire and maintain permanent road and trail easements to assure the protection, administration and use of the NFS lands and resources.

The overall process that the Gallatin NF will continue to use to acquire additional access rights to NFS land, and to perfect and improve existing access rights, is essentially the same process in use since the Forest Plan was adopted in 1987.

The primary methods the Forest Service will continue to use to acquire and to protect access to NFS lands are as follows:

- Land exchange and land purchase
- Reciprocal access arrangements
- Negotiate with landowners to acquire easements by purchase or donation
- Establish or protect existing rights through negotiation or legal procedures

Sincerely,

/s/ Rebecca Lockett Heath
REBECCA LOCKETT HEATH
Forest Supervisor

Attachments: 2007 Travel Plan program of Work
Travel Plan Implementation Strategy