

PROJECT SCOPING STATEMENT **AND FORMAL REQUEST FOR COMMENTS**

Wyoming Department of Transportation – State Hwy 450 Mineral Material Permit

USDA Forest Service
Douglas Ranger District
Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests
and Thunder Basin National Grassland
Weston County, Wyoming

PROPOSED ACTION

The Forest Service is proposing to authorize a Mineral Material Permit to Wyoming Department of Transportation (WYDOT) for the purpose of utilizing soil material for borrow and grading along the State Highway 450 corridor on National Grassland parcels for a reconstruction project on Hwy 450 scheduled to begin early 2007. Total acreage involved amounts to 3.38 acres. Total material will be approximately 7,850 cubic yards for borrow material and 5,403 square yards in grading material. The proposed project area is located in Sections 17, 20, and 21 in T 43N, R 66W, 6th PM, Weston County, Wyoming (see attached map).

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION

Currently, WYDOT is proposing to widen a section of State Hwy 450. In order to complete the widening project more material has to be used on the road bed. There is a shortage of suitable material within the existing ROW along Hwy 450 that WYDOT holds. The request is to collect suitable material from adjacent National Grassland lands. A special use permit must be issued for WYDOT to utilize the soil outside of the existing ROW.

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The project is in the administrative boundary of the Thunder Basin National Grassland, Douglas Ranger District.

The terrain in the project area is gently rolling open grasslands with defined drainages. The terrain is generally flat, with low-lying hills and knolls that are dissected by shallow creeks and drainages.

The project is located in the Cellars Rosecrans Geographic Area. Insects, diseases, wildfire, and grazing patterns will create plant communities with diverse composition and structure. This area will have a healthy and diverse mix of grasses, including the following species: western wheatgrass, needle and thread grass, green needlegrass, little bluestem, blue grama, and prairie junegrass. Management activities will maintain or enhance hardwood and coniferous trees, woody shrub inclusion and other beneficial plant communities and increase vegetative diversity. Tree densities within stands will vary to create landscape-scale diversity. Fire will be used in

some areas to promote open park-like timber stands. Late successional-stage vegetation may be found in the area.

Riparian areas/wood draws will be managed to maintain or enhance different age classes of herbaceous plants, shrubs, and trees. Some areas will be managed to achieve rapid development of cottonwood and willow riparian habitats. Desired riparian species include sedges, rushes, snowberry, rose, willow, cottonwood, and other woody plants.

Management direction in Special Interest Areas will emphasize cultural and zoological resources. Plant and animal species and communities associated with black-footed ferrets and resources. Plant and animal species and communities associated with black-footed ferrets and black-tailed prairie dogs will be actively restored.

Primitive conditions with minimal facility development will be emphasized. Mineral developments such as oil and gas wells and pipelines will be present but visually subordinate in the mid and background. Pastures will remain large.

Sagebrush, grassland community wildlife species such as prairie dogs, mule deer, antelope, mountain plover, sage grouse and raptors inhabit the area. Species identified by USFS as management indicator species (MIS) will be addressed in the Biological Analysis.

A cultural resource survey of the area will be completed. Sites identified during the surveys must and would be protected in accordance with State Historic Preservation Officer direction.

DECISIONS TO BE MADE

Through the environmental analysis process, the District Ranger will determine whether or not, and if so where and under what conditions, a Mineral Material Permit would be issued to Wyoming Department of Transportation authorizing use of the borrow and grading material.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER LAWS AND DOCUMENTS

The proposed project shall meet the requirements of the Thunder Basin National Grassland Land and Resource Management Plan of 2001. The proposal shall comply fully with the Forest-wide standards and guidelines, the Cellars Rosecrans Geographical Area Direction, and the Management Area Direction, including that contained under Management Area 5.12 (See Chapter 1, pages 9 through 31, Chapter 2 pages 9-15 and Chapter 3 page 18-19).

As a part of the effort to develop and describe the proposed action, the District Ranger and ID team reviewed and discussed all available information and data about the possible effects and or impacts that this action could have on the physical and biological environments in the analysis area, and the relationship between the proposal and laws, regulations, and agency policy that must be complied with if the proposal would be implemented.

PUBLIC COMMENTS REQUESTED

At this time the Forest Service seeks information, comments and other assistance from Federal, state, and local agencies, and other individuals or organizations that have an interest in or could be affected by the proposed action. While public comments are welcome at any time, comments received during the official comment period, which ends 30 days after the legal notice requesting comments on this project is published in the Casper Star Tribune Newspaper, will be most useful for the identification of issues and development and analysis of alternatives to the proposal. Comments should be as specific as possible.

No public participation other than this request for comments is planned. All persons who provide comment in response to this request will continue to receive information about this project and will be included in any additional public participation effort that may occur. Those who do not respond will not receive additional information. To be able to appeal any person, non-federal agency or entity has to provide comment or otherwise expressed interest in a particular proposed action by the close of the comment period.

The name and mailing address of the commenter must be provided with his/her comments for appellant standing and so that future documents pertaining to this environmental analysis and the decision can be provided to them. Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record on this proposed action and will be available for public inspection. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered, however, those persons submitting anonymous comments will not have standing to appeal the subsequent decision under 36 CFR Part 215.

Send written comments to the Responsible Official: Robert M. Sprentall, District Ranger, Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests and Thunder Basin National Grassland, Douglas Ranger District, 2250 East Richards Street, Douglas, WY 82633, Attention: Marilee Houtler. Faxed comments will also be accepted at: 307-358-3072.

E-mail comments may be sent to: comments-rocky-mountain-medicine-bow-routt-douglas-thunder-basin@fs.fed.us. Our system will accept email, rtf and word formats. If comments are electronically mailed, the sender should receive an automated electronic acknowledgement from the agency as confirmation of receipt. If the sender does not receive such confirmation, it is the sender's responsibility to ensure timely receipt by other means. Comments may be hand delivered to the Douglas Ranger District office between 7:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays.

Pursuant to 7 CFR 1.27 (d), any person may request the agency to withhold a submission from the public record by showing how the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) permits such confidentiality. Persons requesting such confidentiality should be aware that, under the FOIA, confidentiality may be granted in only very limited circumstances, such as to protect trade secrets. The Forest Service will inform the requester of the agency's decision regarding the request for confidentiality, and where the request is denied, the agency will return the submission and notify the requester that the comments may be resubmitted with name and address within 10 days.

Contact Person Information: Vern Koehler, Douglas Ranger District, 2250 East Richards Street, Douglas WY 82633-8922. Telephone 307-358-4690.

This Public Scoping Notice and the project map are available on the Worldwide Web at:

<http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/mbr/projects/minerals/index.shtml>

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