

# Decision Memo

## Lovell Trail Project

Spring Mountains National Recreation Area  
Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest  
Clark County, Nevada

February 2007

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# Decision Memo

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Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest  
Clark County, Nevada

### Background

In 2004, the Spring Mountains National Recreation Area (SMNRA) requested and subsequently received funding through the Southern Nevada Public Lands Management Act (SNPLMA) to construct trails and a trailhead within the Lovell Canyon and Griffith Peak areas of the Recreation Area. Following are the objectives for the project.

1. **Lovell Trails** - construct an hiker and equestrian trail opportunity and trailhead within the Lovell Canyon area to accomplish the following:
  - a. Provide trails particularly for the people of south Las Vegas and Pahrump as the West side of the SMNRA currently has no trail opportunities.
  - b. Provide increased levels of recreation development and service and increased multi-use trails at appropriate locations to more evenly distribute recreational use throughout the Spring Mountains NRA.
  - c. Provide increased opportunities for developed trail uses with less developed facilities than those found on the east side of the Spring Mountains, while managing to protect resource values and ensure public health, safety, and satisfaction.
  - d. Develop new trails and encourage trail use outside of biodiversity hotspots to avoid further adverse effects on rare and sensitive species.
  
2. **Griffith Peak Trail** – continue the existing Griffith Peak Trail to the summit of the peak to accomplish the following:
  - a. To avoid further adverse impact on sensitive plants and animals.
  - b. To provide a controlled access trail to Griffith Peak by eliminating user developed trails.

Components of this decision are spread over a wide area but all occur within the upper reaches of the Lovell Wash and Trout Wash watersheds. The proposed Lovell Trails would be accessed by the Lovell Canyon Road #537. The proposed Griffith Peak Trail would be accessed by the Harris Springs Road #532. The legal description of the project is: T20 and 21S, R57E, MDB&M.

Interdisciplinary Team of Forest Service and a U.S. Fish and Wildlife specialist was convened and a wide range of trail locations and trailhead opportunities were considered.

## Decision

1. Lovell Trails - I have decided to implement the following in regard to the Lovell Trail portion of the project. This decision will best meet the objectives described for Lovell Trails on page 3.
  - a. **Trails** - Construct a new 3 loop equestrian and hiker trail system of intermittent difficulty and consisting of 9.7 miles of trail.
  - b. **Trailhead** - A low development trailhead will be constructed adjacent to Forest Road (road) 536 in Cave drainage, ¼ mile west of the intersection with Road 537 on the south side of the road (see Map 2a).

This trailhead will include parking for up to 10 vehicles, including up to 5 horse trailers at one time. Parking for trailers will be a “drive through” design. The trailhead will be an unpaved surface and will include adequate parking and turn-around space and informational signing and will not include restroom facilities, trash pick-up (PACK IT IN – PACK IT OUT) or water.

Since the trailhead is not developed or equipped with facilities for overnight camping, camping will not be allowed in the trailhead, although overnight vehicle parking would be allowed for trail users. To prevent camping immediately adjacent to the trailhead, camping will be closed and prohibited by Forest Order on ¼ mile of each side of Road 536 from its intersection with Road 537 west to the top of the first switchback, a distance of approximately 1 mile and a total area of 320 acres.

The entire trailhead will be fenced to prevent intrusion into the adjacent Cave drainage in order to protect stream banks from excessive impacts and to prevent expansion of the trailhead.

- c. **Road Improvements** - To provide appropriate access to the trailhead, Lovell Wash on Road 536 just west of the intersection with Road 537, will be “bridged” using the most appropriate crossing structure (see Map 2a). Installation of this crossing may require relocation of Road 536 on either side of the crossing for a short distance and could require short sections of cut and fill. In addition, Cave drainage, which is intersected by road 536 approximately ¼ mile west of road 537, will be channeled into a culvert under the road.

A report on Lovell Wash hydrology is included in the Project Record as “Hydrology and Hydraulics for the Proposed Lovell Wash Bridge, Eric Moser - Hydrologist/USFS T.E.A.M.S. Enterprise Unit, August 10, 2006”.

- d. **Non-system Road Closures** – physically close and rehabilitate 0.2 miles of road adjacent to Lovell Wash and abandon 5.3 miles of road acquired with the purchase of a portion of the Torino Ranch (see Conservation Plan, #3 p9 for details).
- e. **Dispersed Campsite Closure** – physically close and rehabilitate 7 dispersed campsites along Road 536 between its intersections with Road 537 one mile west to the top of the first switchback (see Conservation Plan, #4 p10 for details).

2. **Griffith Peak** - I have decided to implement the following in regard to the Griffith Peak portion of the project. This decision will best meet the objectives described for Griffith Peak on page 3.
  - a. **Trails** - Construct an extension of the existing Griffith Peak trail to access the summit of Griffith Peak as shown on Map 2b. The trail will be difficult for hikers and equestrians and will be 0.4 miles long. This new section of trail will also be accessible from the South Loop Trail.
  - b. **User Trail Closures** – Close approximately 0.7 miles of user trail that crosses Griffith Peak as shown on Map 2b (see Conservation Plan, #2 p 9).
3. **Conservation Plan** – The Conservation Plan which is attached is part of my Decision for this project and provides direction for implementation.
4. **Contractors Camp** – a contractor’s camp should be designated for construction of the trails at the very end of Road 537, north of Torino Ranch. The camp will be used over a long period of time and will need to provide security, access, sanitation and reasonable conveniences. Camp particulars should be included in the construction contract which should include a fire, infrastructure, travel and rehabilitation plans.

## Public Involvement

Bilingual signing announcing the project has been in place at the project area for the last year. We received four phone calls as a result of the signs and they each requested additional information. These individuals were included in the project mailing list.

A proposal for this project was listed in the Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA) beginning on October 1, 2006. The SOPA was provided to Humboldt–Toiyabe National Forest mail list of individuals, organizations and public agencies. No responses from SOPA listing were received.

Lovell Trail project was publicly scoped via a letter on September 6, 2006. This letter was mailed to a list of 46 individuals and organizations. The letter included a description of the project and locational maps showing where the bridge, trailhead and trails would be located. The project was highlighted in the Pahrump Valley Times on September 22, 2006. Six responses to the letter were received and two of the letters generated issues (see the attached Public Involvement - Issues and Responses starting on p14).

No legal notice was prepared as the project will be approved by a Decision Memo.

## Findings Required by Other Laws

This decision is consistent with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) as follows:

This action is categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement or an environmental assessment under FSH 1909.15, Chapter 30, and the following categories:

1. Section 31.12, #4 – Repair and Maintenance of roads for construction of the Lovell Wash crossing and road alignment portion of the project;
2. Section 31.2, #1 – Construction of Trails for the trail construction portion of the project; and
3. Section 31.2, #6 – Wildlife Habitat Improvement for the closure and restoration portions of the project.

Section 31.2 is included under “Categories of Actions for Which a Project or Case File and Decision Memo are required.”

I considered the extraordinary circumstances listed in FSH 1909.15, Section 30.3, #2. Of these extraordinary circumstances, I gave strong consideration for the following which were present in the project area:

1. Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service Sensitive Species (including species of concern).

The biological evaluation - biological assessment (BEBA) for the Lovell Trails project includes documentation on the effects of the project on federally listed species, as well as species of concern. A finding of “May Impact individuals but, Not likely to lead to a trend towards listing” was reached. A copy of the BEBA and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Concurrence is available in the project files.

2. Floodplains, wetlands or municipal watersheds.

The project should have no effect on the Upper or Lower Cave Springs as no changes in the existing condition are made by this decision. Cave Springs and the nearby campsites are being monitored to determine if negative effects are increasing. Decisions concerning these campsites would be made in the future.

Effects on remaining 5 springs located within the project area should be neutral due to implementation of ¼ mile development buffers on the springs. Definitions and effects on project riparian resources are further discussed in the attached “Public Involvement - Issues and Responses (see 2b p14).

3. Congressionally designated areas, such as Wilderness, Wilderness study areas, or National Recreation Areas.

Trail opportunities, including the construction of new trails, are appropriate within a National Recreation Area and in congressionally designated Wilderness. The Lovell Trail portion of this project is primarily within the La Madre Wilderness. This project will decrease the acreage of

the Wilderness in Pristine while increasing the amount of acreage in Primitive Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) categories. The overall effect on the Wilderness character for the La Madre will be minimal because this is the only trail within the FS managed portion of the Wilderness. Additionally, it is hoped that this trail will reduce some of the trail use in the adjacent Mount Charleston Wilderness.

The Griffith Peak portion of the project is located within the Mount Charleston Wilderness. The trail will access a major peak which is a destination for many hikers. The trail is located with the Primitive ROS category and the addition of a short (0.4 mile) new trail will not measurably affect levels of use or type of experience.

4. American Indian religious or cultural sites.

Nation to Nation communication on the project was initiated with a pre-scoping letter to tribal representatives on June 30, 2006. This was followed up with a meeting on August 7, 2006 where projects, including this one, were presented and discussed. A draft copy of this Decision Memo was provided to tribal representatives prior to finalization as was previously agreed upon.

5. Archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas.

The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) Lovell Trail Report includes documentation on American Indian cultural sites associated with the project. A finding of “No Adverse Affect” was reached. A copy of the SHPO Report and the Nevada State Historic Officers concurrence are maintained in the project files.

The categorical exclusion is appropriate in this situation because the extraordinary circumstances have a low degree of potential affect to the environment.

This decision is consistent with the SMNRA General Management Plan as required by the National Forest Management Act. The project was designed in conformance with Area-Wide and the West Side goals, objectives and standards and guidelines of the Management Plan.

This decision is in conformance with the Clark County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan, particularly with Section 1.2.3. The Goals and Objectives of this Section include a Measurable Biological Objective of “no net unmitigated loss or fragmentation of habitat”. As displayed in Public Involvement – Issues and Responses, p 17, Table 1 of this document, there is a positive permanent net gain in habitat for this project. There is no known scientific documentation of fragmentation of habitat for wildlife species as a result of construction and use of low density non-motorized trails with 24 inch or less tread width.

This decision is also in conformance with the Conservation Agreement for the Spring Mountains NRA. The loop trails and trailhead are not within any Biodiversity Hotspots and are designed to encourage recreation use outside of the hotspots. The Griffith Peak Trail is within a biodiversity hotspot but is replacing user trails of greater length and similar acreage.

This decision is consistent with the FSM 2000 – National Forest Resource Management, Chapter 2080 – Noxious Weed Management: Supplement No: 2000-2004-1

**Implementation Date**

This project will be implemented on or after the date that this Decision Memo is signed.

**Administrative Review or Appeal Opportunities**

This decision is not subject to administrative appeal.

**Contact Person**

For additional information concerning this decision contact:

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Dewey Warner

for \_\_\_\_\_

February 26, 2007 \_\_\_\_\_

TIMOTHY J. SHORT  
District Ranger

Date

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**Conservation Plan  
Including  
Design Standards, Rehabilitation and Monitoring  
For The  
Lovell Trails Project**

1. **Construction Scheduling** - Construction would be completed outside of bird breeding season (May 1 to August 1) to protect against impacts to nesting birds for all activities. Construction may occur if breeding bird surveys are accomplished beforehand and all nest sites protected until fledging. The protection buffer would be 50 feet for neotropical migratory and other songbirds and ¼ mile for raptors.
2. **User Trail Closures** – Close and rehabilitate 0.7 mile (0.3 acre based on an average width of 4 feet) of user created trail which spans Griffith Peak as shown on the attached Map #2b. The objective of the closure is rehabilitate the trail and adjacent campsites to allow for the recovery of the sensitive plant and butterfly host plant species. Due to the location in Wilderness, the entire rehabilitation will be accomplished by hand work using local materials and hand tools, and will be completed under the supervision of a botanist and a trails specialist.

Develop a schedule of activities for the Griffith Peak Trail rehabilitation and review with the Fish and Wildlife Service. If possible, begin trail rehabilitation prior to impacting new Mt. Charleston blue butterfly habitat to minimize the temporal loss of butterfly habitat. Responsibility – Natural Resource Officer

Rehabilitation activities will include:

- a. Breaking up and dispersing campfire rings and all user created structures that are present at campsites;
- b. Seed from Torrey's milkvetch will be collected and reseeded into the closed trails. If necessary seeds may be bulked up at a commercial grower and/or the seed may be incorporated into seed balls using techniques developed by National Park Service Lake Mead Nursery which reduce the amount of seed needed for direct seeding. Restore 0.3 acres of Mt. Charleston blue butterfly habitat where the rehabilitated trail bisects butterfly habitat as identified in 2004 and 2005 plant surveys.
- c. As part of rehabilitation monitoring identified in the BE/BA for weeds, collect data once a year for three consecutive growing seasons on grass cover and the density of Torrey's milkvetch plants on restored areas. Project success criteria include no more than 10 percent cover of grasses and a density of at least 10 Torrey's milkvetch plants per square meter (Given that the restoration will be linear along the restored trail, sampling a square meter can be completed using a belt transect or randomly placed small quadrats within restored areas). If these success criteria are not achieved by the end of the three year monitoring period, perform additional seeding of Torrey's milkvetch and /or weeding of grasses or other unwanted species as necessary to meet the target criteria for two additional growing seasons.
- d. Install signing per #6 in this plan.
- e. Remove all rock cairns along the user trail;

- f. Disperse rocks, scree, logs, other vegetation over the rehabilitated trail surface to:
  - i. make it physically unobtrusive to the trail users;
  - ii. facilitate rehabilitation of the trail by providing shelter for animals and seed;
  - iii. help prevent erosion on the trail.

The user trail should be closed and rehabilitated at the same time the new trail is constructed to assure a smooth transition from old to new. Apply the Weed standards as displayed in #7 below to the Griffith Peak closure. Responsibility – trails specialist and botanist.

3. **Non-System Road Closures** - Close and rehabilitate 0.2 miles of road as described in the Decision Memo and displayed on Map 2a. Closure should include thorough ripping of the roads at least to a depth of 8” to remove compaction and provide for water infiltration and native plant revegetation. The road rehabilitation should also include activities 2a and 2d above. Vegetation that must be removed for construction of the trailhead will be planted within this road closure to help physically and visually block the road while facilitating revegetation. This removal and replanting will require a backhoe and direct botanist supervision. In addition, the beginning of this road where it intersects with Road 536 should be blocked with boulders of sufficient size to prevent them being moved. Boulders should be partially buried in a trench to discourage winching them out of place. This road should be closed during construction of the new trailhead. Responsibility – trails specialist, recreation staff, botanist

In August 2005, the FS purchased 122.24 acres of Torino Ranch in Lovell Canyon just north of the current ranch development. This land had been planned for development and was roaded. The development portions of the project included a 5.3 mile cut and fill road system and lot pads. This project was abandoned by the previous owner. FS IDT members including a wildlife biologist and botanist performed a site visit to determine rehabilitation needs for this area with the intent of using it as mitigation for lost habitat from Lovell trails. The roads were found to be stable condition and are revegetating naturally with native species of plants. This is likely due to the fact that the roads were never used for their intended purpose and hence were never heavily compacted, allowing for natural revegetation. This 5.3 mile road system will be abandoned as is and will continue through early succession.

4. **Campsite Closures** – Close and rehabilitate 4 existing large (100 Ft<sup>2</sup>) dispersed multi-campsites and 3 small (40 ft<sup>2</sup>) single dispersed campsites adjacent to road 536 as displayed in Map 2a. Campsite closures will use the same methods described under “Road Closures” in #3 above. Care should be taken not to damage tree roots during ripping so some areas will not be able to be ripped to a depth of 8”. Responsibility – Recreation Staff.
5. **Camping Closure Order** – issue a permanent forest closure order per 36 CFR 261.58e, (July 1, 2005 edition), to administratively close the area of approximately ¼ mile on each side of Road 536 from its intersection with Road 537 west approximately one mile to the top of the first switchback to all camping. Post the closure in accordance with 36 CFR 261.51. Implement the closure on or before the Lovell Trailhead is opened for public use (see #6 below). Responsibility – Law Enforcement and Recreation.
6. **Education and Visitor Information** – Place the following:
  - g. Griffith Peak – Place information signing at the Griffith Peak and South Loop Trailheads on trail changes on Griffith Peak.
  - h. Place temporary closure/education signs at the ends of the obliterated sections of user

trail on Griffith Peak.

- i. Place No Camping signs along Road 536 where existing dispersed campsites are closed.
- j. Place an education sign on the bulletin board at the Lovell Trailhead explaining the importance of staying on the trail to protect butterfly and sensitive plants habitat.
- k. Place signs or assure signs are already in place before new trails are open for use by the public that address the requirements as detailed in #7 below. Enforce the regulations. Include an education element of the importance of keeping weeds out of Wilderness areas in particular.

Responsibility – Annice Ellis, trails specialist, Wilderness specialist

## 7. **Weed Monitoring and Mitigations**

- a. This section was developed using the following documents:

Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest  
Noxious Weed and Invasive Plants Management Plan – 2002

Environmental Assessment  
Noxious Weed Control Program  
Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest  
Austin, Bridgeport, Carson, and Tonopah Ranger Districts  
And Spring Mountains National Recreation Area  
April 2001

FSM 2000 – National Forest Resource Management  
Chapter 2080 – Noxious Weed Management  
Supplement No.: 2000-2004-1

- b. Lovell Trails Weed Management Plan - Take the following measures to limit the introduction of weeds during and after trail construction:
  - i. Before construction equipment moves into a project area, evaluate and prioritize invasive weeds along existing Forest Service access roads leading to the project area and treat as necessary. (Pulling them would be the best for this site.)
  - ii. Remove all mud, dirt, and plant parts from all off-road equipment before moving into project area.
  - iii. When practical clean all equipment that will be used for the project prior to coming on site. For heavy equipment and vehicles concentrate inspection and cleaning on the undercarriage, with special emphasis on axles, frame cross-members, motor mounts, and underneath steps, running boards, front bumper/brush guard assemblies, and radiators
  - iv. Identify sites where equipment may be cleaned.
  - v. If cleaning occurs in the field, choose sites away from watercourses or areas that will drain into a stream system.

- vi. It is preferable to use a pressure washer that is capable of 2,000 PSI.
- vii. Eliminate the movement of existing and new invasive weed species caused by moving infested gravel and fill materials. Inspect and approve all gravel and borrow sources outside the project site before use and transport.
- viii. Maintain as much microhabitat for desirable vegetation as feasible in areas that will have ground disturbance to help suppress invasive weeds. Minimize the removal of trees and other roadside vegetation during construction, reconstruction, and maintenance, particularly on southerly aspects, except when removal is required for public safety.
- ix. Select invasive weed-free staging areas and parking sites.
- x. Identify areas to be avoided during construction.

#### For the Public

- xi. Use only Certified weed free hay or pellitized feed.
- xii. Request the public to clean the hooves and brush all pack and saddle animals before entering the National Forest and feed the animals weed-free forage 64 hours before traveling in the National Forest.
- xiii. Post signs informing Forest visitors about weeds, encourage them not to pick and transport flowers or other plant materials, and inform the Forest of any infestations.

#### c. Baseline inventory

Weed data has been collected in the Lovell area in 2004 and 2006 by the Interagency Weed Sentry team and NCC. Species documented in or directly adjacent to the Project area include: Flixweed (*Descurainia Sophia*), Tumble mustard (*Sisymbrium altissimum*), mullein (*Verbascum thapsus*), Russian thistle (*Salsola*), cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*) and sweet clover (*Melilotus officinale*) are located in the vicinity of the trailhead.

It is recommended to pull weed species (minus the cheatgrass) in the area prior to trail construction.

#### d. Monitoring Plan

Monitor the trailhead and trail and trailhead construction cleaning areas for weeds the spring following construction initiation. If present, record on weed survey forms which include a space for estimating of numbers of plants present. GPS new infestations or expansions on or adjacent to the trailhead and the trail itself which will give us total area infested so we can track infestation areas over time. Pull weeds as they are encountered during surveys, especially if infestations are small. The Weed Sentry (Interagency Restoration Team) plans to monitor this site for us.

Additional weed monitoring will include the following steps:

- xiv. After a section of trail is completed but before any new invasive weeds would go to seed the trail should be surveyed by a botanist to assure it is free of invasive weed species as included on the most current protocol list. This should be repeated until the entire trail is surveyed post construction and we are sure that construction did not introduce invasive weeds along the trail corridors.

If weeds are found during this monitoring, they should be immediately destroyed using the best tool available and before they have a chance to go to seed. If it is not possible to destroy the invasive weeds on the monitoring trips, the botanist should obtain help and return to complete the eradication prior to the weeds going to seed.

- xv. The trail should be monitored and treated for weeds after two or three years of use following the initial monitoring and treatment as defined in 5a above. This will provide good information on the introduction of invasive weeds from hikers and equestrians that use the trail but before they become too widely established as to make eradication difficult.

The results of the monitoring should be documented and placed in the project files.

Responsibility – District Botanist

- 8. **Visitor Monitoring and Mitigations** – The associated analysis was limited to the construction of the trails, trailhead, Cave drainage culvert, and Lovell Wash crossing as well as listed restoration activities. Concern was expressed during scoping that the new trails could lead to a proliferation of user trails and/or campsites in the project area. There is a concern over this potential due to the sensitivity of some of the areas the trail passes through, particularly butterfly and sensitive plant habitat. Since it is impossible to accurately predict these potential activities, it is deemed necessary to monitor and mitigate this possibility.

Even though we expect the trail system to be primarily day use, there is a probability some visitors will camp overnight. A few well placed campsites are not an issue. It is also expected that some off trail use will occur by those looking to relieve themselves, by hunters and other explorers. Again, given the terrain, vegetation and distances, it is expected to be a minimal and acceptable.

Monitoring these activities should occur at the same time that weed monitoring is occurring, i.e. shortly after construction and 2 to 3 years after construction. At the time of monitoring, it will be important to determine that user trails are not being constructed to cultural or historical sites, springs, or sensitive biological resource sites. These trails should be immediately closed by scattering brush and vegetation and obscuring the tread. Campsites should be kept to a reasonable limit of three on the loop trail system. Additional campsites or campsites that are causing resource damage should be closed.

The results of the monitoring should be documented and placed in the project files. Responsibility – Trails Specialist, Botanist

- 9. **Mitigation Bank** – To maximize the use of the 122-acre Lovell Canyon (Torino Ranch) parcel recently purchased by the Forest Service perform surveys and habitat assessments for all Conservation Agreement plants and animals within the parcel. This mitigation bank can be used to achieve no-net unmitigated loss goals for the 21 Conservation Agreement species that would be impacted by the proposed Lovell Trail System (USFW Concurrence Letter for Lovell Canyon Trails Project –

Attachment #1, February 14, 2007). Impacts associated with the Lovell Trail System should be subtracted from the total habitat available for each species; remaining habitat would then be available as mitigation for other Forest Service projects. If there is not sufficient habitat available within the parcel, then consult with the Service to develop an acceptable alternative.

## Public Involvement - Issues and Responses For the Lovell Trails Project

Three contacts lead to the development of the following issues for the project.

1. Torino Ranch – personal and written comments – The trail and trailhead was originally planned to close to private property and could encourage trespass (issue).

Early and frequent communication with the Torino camp led to a relocation of the trail and trailhead away from the camp. This issue was resolved to the camps satisfaction as documented in the planning record.

2. Nevada Department of Wildlife Comment Letter dated 10/6/06 - following is the comment analysis from that review.
  - a. Comment 1-1 (issue) on the increase in visitation in remote area with corresponding increase in negative impacts to wildlife habitat.

This was discussed at length even though it is a vague, all encompassing comment with no supporting details. We admit that the amount of use will increase and can estimate how much that use will be based on available parking, etc. The intent in the purpose and need was to move some use from the more crowded eastern SMNRA to the west. This issue is addressed in the Biological Evaluation – Biological Assessment (BEBA) for the project.

It was agreed that some monitoring of the situation would be appropriate and is included in the Mitigation and Monitoring Plan, #9.

- b. Comment 1-2 and 1-4-2 – Potential impacts to Cave and Coal springs and other riparian resources from the project.

The definition of riparian area is a geographically delineated area with distinctive resource values and characteristics that are comprised of the aquatic and riparian ecosystems, floodplains and wetlands. These include visible vegetative or physical characteristics reflecting water influence. Indicators that distinguish riparian areas from upland terrestrial ecosystems are distinctive vegetation communities that require free or unbounded water and hydric soil characteristics (*Toiyabe Land and Resource Management Plan, Page VI-30 – Definitions*).

Early on in the planning process for Lovell Trails, the Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) identified riparian areas within the project for avoidance. Team members established ¼ mile as an appropriate “buffer” for avoidance considering the resource, topography, vegetation and the amount and types of expected use at the trailhead and trail. Most of the resources that were identified were springs. All seven known springs and associated riparian area buffers were avoided regardless of the amount and duration of flow. These springs are

mapped in GIS project files under *Lovell Canyon Trails and Trailhead*, bcg 6/26/06. Coal Spring is over one mile from the project and is not within the project area.

Two areas received particular attention:

1. The Narrows and associated spring – original trail plans placed potential trail routes within a short distance of the Narrows, a perennial spring and stream within the project area. IDT deliberations identified this has a substantial riparian feature and the entire area was avoided by the proposed actions, with no trail routes within  $\pm 1$  mile. The project is expected to have no effect on the Narrows.
2. The trailhead location – the trailhead has to be located along the Lovell Summit Road, #536 to access the proposed trails. Ever potential site between Lovell Summit and the intersection of Road 536 to the 537 Lovell Road was considered. Sites were rejected for a variety of reasons including: size and topography, proximity to Cave Springs, proximity to Torino Ranch, relationship to ephemeral streams and floodplains, and vehicle accessibility. The final proposed location is the only suitable location and is  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile beyond the  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile buffer on Lower Cave Springs for a total of  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile. The project is expected to have no effect on Cave Springs.

The drainage that flows past the proposed trailhead is an ephemeral stream channel with its headwaters at Cave Springs. This channel has no hydric soil characteristics and does not support riparian vegetation and hence is not considered a riparian area. To protect the banks of Cave drainage, a fence between the trailhead and drainage is part of the decision for this project.

- c. Comment 1-3 and 1-4-4 – Recreation conflicts between user groups, specifically between hunters/trappers and hikers and equestrians. This includes unlawfully interfering with a person hunting or trapping.

There is not expected to be the level of use, as least in the near term, which would result in conflicts between users of any type. As urban areas grow and become closer to this trail system, crowding may become a problem at a future date and would be addressed at that time.

Nevada Revised Statute, Title 45 – Section 503.015 addresses interference with persons lawfully hunting or trapping. The provisions of this regulation do not apply to any incidental interference arising from lawful activities by users of public lands, including recreationist. The Lovell Trail is a designated recreation trail and hikers and horseback riders would therefore be engaged in a lawful recreational activity. The Nevada Division of Wildlife should provide information to recreation users of the hunting seasons to inform users of the presence of hunters in the area. We could post such information on the trailhead information kiosk.

- d. Comment 1-4-1 – avoid crests of ridges, cliffs, etc due to bighorn sheep and peregrines.

The project is not near cliffs, etc. and there were no sightings of these species in the project area. This comment will also be addressed in the BEBA.

- e. Comment 1-4-3 – Schedule construction outside of bird breeding season (May 1 to August 1) so as to eliminate nesting bird surveys while minimizing impacts to birds.

This suggestion is discussed in the Conservation Plan (see #1, p9).

3. USF&W Comment Letter dated 10/2/06 – following is the comment analysis from that review.

- a. Comment 2-1 – There is a need to complete butterfly surveys in the Griffith Peak Area and along the central portion of the loop trails to meet Conservation Agreement requirement for pre-construction surveys when host plants have been identified.

This comment is addressed in the BEBA which is located in the project file.

- b. Comment 2-2 – No net loss of habitat applies to the project for new trail construction and for trailhead.

See Table 1 – Changes in habitat by acreage for the Lovell Project on p17.

- c. Comment 2-3 - Reconsider the location of the proposed Lovell Trailhead and parking area to conform to General Management Plan Standard e0.3 – Prohibit parking and camping within riparian areas.

See the response to comments 1-2 and 1-4-2 above.

- d. Comment 2-4 – support for avoiding water/springs near the Narrows

See the response to comments 1-2 and 1-4-2 above.

- e. Comment 2-5 Support replacing user trails on Griffith Peak with designated trail. Would like to see a restoration plan for user trail.

Restoration activities are included in the attached Conservation Plan.

Table 1 – Changes in habitat by acreage for the Lovell Project. Distances and areas were calculated using GPS data as corrected for GIS mapping unless otherwise identified. All acreages are accurate within the limitations described in gathering the data. Numbers are rounded to 1/10 of an acre.

Activity	DM Location	Formula	Net Change (Acres)
Construct Lovell Trails – 9.7 miles	Decision 1a, p4	9.7 miles x 5,280 ft x avg. 6 ft width / 43,560 ft <sup>2</sup> = 7.1	-7.1 permanent
Construct Trailhead – 2 acres	Decision 1b, p4	As computed on Delorme Mapping program as a polygon	-2.0 permanent
Construct new crossing on Lovell Wash	Decision 1c, p4	As computed visually on the ground.	- 1.0 temporary
Construct extension of Griffith Peak Trail of 0.4 miles	Decision 2a, p5	0.4 miles x 5,280 ft x avg. 6 ft width / 43, 560 ft <sup>2</sup> = 0.7	- 0.3 permanent
Close and rehabilitate 0.7 miles of user trail on Griffith Peak	Decision 2b, p5-#2, p9	0.7 miles x 5,280 ft x avg. 4 ft width / 43, 560 ft <sup>2</sup> = 0.3	+0.3 permanent
Contractors Camp	Decision 4, p5,	Estimated 1 acre will be impacted and restored when project is finished.	-1.0 temporary
Close a non-system road 0.2 miles long	#3, p9	0.2 miles x 5,280 ft x avg. 12 ft width / 43, 560 ft <sup>2</sup> = 0.3	+0.3 permanent
Abandon 5.3 miles of road included in the Torino Land Purchase	#3, p10	5.3 miles x 5,280 ft x avg. 16 ft width / 43, 560 ft <sup>2</sup> = 10.3	+ 10.3 permanent
Close 7 dispersed campsites	#4, p10	4 campsites of 10,000 ft <sup>2</sup> = 40,000 ft <sup>2</sup> + 3 campsites of 1,600 ft <sup>2</sup> = 4,800 ft <sup>2</sup> = 44,800 ft <sup>2</sup> / 43,560 ft <sup>2</sup> = 1.0	+ 1.0 permanent
Temporary Acreage Change		Habitat	-0.2 acres
Permanent Acreage Change		Habitat	+2.5 acres

As is displayed in the above Table 1, there is a positive gain of approximately 2.5 acres in habitat for this project. Also see the discussion under Findings - Clark County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan on p7.