

DECISION MEMO

Lindon-Dry Canyon Bonneville Shoreline Trail Reconstruction and Construction

**USDA Forest Service
Uinta National Forest
Pleasant Grove Ranger District
Utah County, Utah
T. 5 S., R. 2 E., Sec 26 and 35**

1. BACKGROUND

The Bonneville Shoreline Trail, one of 51 Millennium Legacy Trails in the United States, is a popular recreation site located along the heavily-populated Wasatch Front. When completed, the trail will cover more than 100 miles along the shoreline of the prehistoric Lake Bonneville from Brigham City to Nephi, Utah. At the present time, many sections are still needed to complete the full length of the trail. The southern end of this Lindon-Dry Canyon section will connect to the current trail terminus at the Dry Canyon Trailhead, while the northern end will stop at Millett Hollow. It is anticipated that the trail will eventually connect to the Battle Creek Trailhead just north of Millett Hollow once sufficient easements have been acquired. This new section will also provide access to the Lindon City Equestrian Trailhead, and trails in Indian and Sumac Hollows.

The project area is located within Sections 26 and 35 of Township 5 South, Range 2 East, Salt Lake Meridian, in the Lower Provo Management Area of the Pleasant Grove Ranger District. Most of the Lindon-Dry Canyon Bonneville Shoreline Trail segment will be located on about 200 acres of land acquired by the Uinta National Forest on March 31, 2003. This parcel, known as the Dry Canyon Acquisition (DCA), provides public access to the Uinta National Forest, the Mount Timpanogos Wilderness Area and the Timpanogos State Wildlife Management Area.

Much of the DCA is crisscrossed with two-track trails/roads created by unauthorized motorized off-highway vehicle (OHV) activities that occurred during the time the land was in private ownership. The Lindon-Dry Canyon project will take advantage of those existing OHV trails/roads that best meet the standards for the Bonneville Shoreline Trail. The majority of the trail will be located along areas that have been disturbed by motorized activities and/or are user-created recreation trails; only a limited amount of new ground disturbance will be needed. This segment of the Bonneville Shoreline Trail will be within the travel corridor identified by the following trail committees: Mountainland Association of Governments Bonneville Shoreline Trail, Lindon City, and Utah County.

Prior to acquiring the DCA, the Bonneville Shoreline Trail ended at the Dry Canyon Trailhead, which is located on Forest Service land. A trail did connect the Dry Canyon Trailhead with the Lindon City Equestrian Trailhead; however, it was on private land and no easement had been granted to Lindon City or the Forest Service to connect the Bonneville Shoreline Trail with the Lindon City trail system. Additionally this trail was not officially recognized as being part of the Bonneville Shoreline Trail system.

2. PROPOSED ACTION

The Pleasant Grove Ranger District proposed to reconstruct and construct about 1.6 miles of trail to add to the Bonneville Shoreline Trail system. The new section will be called the Lindon-Dry Canyon Bonneville Shoreline Trail. About 1.2 miles of the total length will be reconstructed on existing “ghost roads” and/or illegal user-created trails that were created while the property was in private ownership. Those user-created trails that best meet the standards for the Bonneville Shoreline Trail will be connected to form one trail, 48 inches in width, with a slope grade under 10 percent. The remaining 0.4 miles will be constructed across relatively undisturbed ground. The new section of Bonneville Shoreline Trail will connect on the southern end to the existing Dry Canyon Trailhead, and its northern end will terminate at Millett Hollow.

Unauthorized motor vehicle access to the Bonneville Shoreline Trail will be prevented through installation of rock barriers at the two locations where the trail intersects with the Dry Canyon Trailhead and the Big Baldy “firebreak road.”

3. PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose of the proposed action is to allow the Pleasant Grove Ranger District to reconstruct and construct one distinct segment of the Bonneville Shoreline Trail from the Dry Canyon Trailhead to Millett Hollow, including access to the Lindon City Equestrian Trailhead, to be known as the Lindon-Dry Canyon Bonneville Shoreline Trail. Prior to the Forest Service obtaining the DCA, there was no legal public access between Dry Canyon and the Lindon City Equestrian Trailhead, or from the equestrian trailhead to Millett Hollow. Now that the Forest Service has acquired these lands, it is possible to link existing trails into one identifiable travel route and maintain this facility to meet Bonneville Shoreline Trail user needs. The Lindon-Dry Canyon Bonneville Shoreline Trail is needed to provide a transportation corridor for pedestrians, equestrians, and bicyclists that will meet the trail safety standards established by the Bonneville Shoreline Trail Committee and Forest Service Trail Design Parameters (June 12, 2002). The existing trail segments need to be redesigned to meet the Trail Class 3 standards.

Having acquired the DCA, construction of this segment of the Bonneville Shoreline Trail will move the Lower Provo Management Area towards its desired future condition as identified in the Uinta National Forest’s 2003 Land and Resource Management Plan (2003 Forest Plan):

Land adjustments and acquisitions associated with the Bonneville Shoreline Trail are complete along the Wasatch Front, resulting in a more identifiable Forest boundary (p 5-84), and

Recreation opportunities are provided for a wide variety of uses (p 5-81).

As stated further in the description of the Lower Provo Management Area,

[t]he biggest law enforcement issues relate to motorized encroachment by ATVs, trucks, and over-the-snow machines (p 5-80).

There is an on-going need to monitor and restrict illegal OHV use within the DCA and stop misuse of the new Bonneville Shoreline Trail segments following construction.

4. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The Pleasant Grove Ranger District initiated scoping for this proposal on January 26, 2004, by sending a letter to 38 known interested parties. The proposed project was also listed in the Uinta National Forest's "*Schedule of Proposed Actions*" publication in the following editions: Summer 2004, Spring 2004, Winter 2004, Fall 2003, Summer 2003, and Spring 2003. In response to these solicitations, the Forest received written comments from two groups: the Utah Environmental Congress and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The project was also scoped internally. Based upon public comments and interdisciplinary team review, seven issues were identified:

1. Wide-spread, ongoing, illegal OHV recreation within the DCA. The amount of illegal motorized use along the foothill benches is increasing and resulting in extensive resource damage to vegetation, soils, wildlife habitat, big game winter range, and non-motorized recreation opportunities. OHV trails not used in the reconstruction of this trail should be obliterated. Signing to educate users should be erected. More effective barricades are necessary. Curb illegal recreation patterns through increased law enforcement presence.

Since procurement of the DCA, the Uinta National Forest, in partnership with Lindon City and the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, has barricaded 85 percent of the entrance points through which most of the illegal motorized vehicles were obtaining ingress to the area. Those illegal user-created trails along the route that are not incorporated as part of the reconstructed segment will be scarified, seeded with native grass, and mulched to reduce existing erosion impacts. As the Forest Service moves to reclaim other unclassified roadways, additional barricades will be installed. The Dry Canyon Watershed Restoration Project, also includes provisions for the obliteration and rehabilitation of user-created roads and trails in the DCA, an area that includes this new Bonneville Shoreline Trail segment.

The watershed protection order that closed the Wasatch Front to motorized use in 1988 remains in effect. The Forest will continue to install barriers to prevent motorized access and monitor those barriers' effectiveness. Law enforcement officers from the Forest, city, and state will continue to conduct patrols to observe compliance, and will continue to issue citations to offenders.

2. Soil erosion resulting from Bonneville Shoreline Trail construction, and impacts of water run-off from user-created (illegal) trails and roads. There is a concern that construction of this section of Bonneville Shoreline Trail may further degrade environmental quality by adding to the soil erosion problems being produced by runoff from the about 14 miles of user-created trails and roads in the DCA.

Construction of the new trail segment will not result in additional soil erosion. No mechanized tools will be used in reconstruction and construction; only hand tools will be

used. Drainage structures will be constructed along the trail and other mitigation measures implemented to divert water from the tread surface and minimize run-off. Trail surface soil erosion should be limited after restoration and revegetation efforts. Measures will also be implemented to prevent noxious weed establishment and prevent the expansion of existing infestations. Disturbed areas will be seeded with a native grass mixture.

3. Effects on wildlife. Stress on wildlife as a result of trail construction. General protection of migratory bird and raptor habitat.

Construction activities will be timed to not conflict with sensitive wildlife periods (e.g., breeding and nesting seasons) and areas. The trail is located in critical deer and elk winter range. Construction will be completed prior to occupation of these ranges. Appendix C of the 2003 Forest Plan, "Recommended Raptor Buffers," is taken directly from the "Utah Field Office Guidelines for Raptor Protection from Human and Land Use Disturbances," published by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's Utah Field Office in 2002. This direction will be followed in construction of the trail. Annual trail maintenance in the future will be completed at times that will not impact breeding or nesting seasons.

There will be short-term noise disturbance to birds resulting from the use of hand tools; however, reconstruction and construction activities will occur in the fall outside the typical breeding and nesting season. The project area is already impacted by recreation use, including mountain bikers, hikers, and other types of recreational activities. Seeding of native grasses and forbs and planting of native shrubs will facilitate rehabilitation of the disturbed areas within the trail construction alignment.

Vegetation along the trail alignment is comprised mostly of cheatgrass, jointed oat grass, and oakbrush. The oakbrush is used for hiding cover for small wildlife species and nesting habitat for birds. Ground-disturbing activities within the proposed 4-foot construction corridor will require some revegetation for soil stabilization, noxious weed control, and aesthetics.

Short-term impacts will consist of limited loss of oakbrush habitat as a result of clearing the trail passageway, though most of the trail will be reconstructed from existing user-created trail already devoid of vegetation. Total acreage of oakbrush likely to be impacted by this activity is estimated at 0.5 acres. Longer-term impacts may consist of improved vegetation diversity along the Bonneville Shoreline Trail, reduced erosion from illegal motorized use within the DCA, and control of noxious weeds within the construction alignment. These positive effects will result in improved soil stability and vegetation diversity, thereby improving small game habitat within the immediate area.

4. Effects to roadless and wilderness characteristics.

Portions of the Lindon-Dry Canyon segment run through the southwestern edge of the Mount Timpanogos Roadless Area (#418032). According to the nine roadless area

characteristics used to evaluate the area in the “Roadless Area Reevaluation and Recommendation for Wilderness” prepared for the 2003 Forest Plan, this roadless area rated as follows (FEIS for the 2003 Forest Plan, Appendices Volume I, Appendix C, p C-192 through C-198):

- *Soil, Air, and Water – Low to medium*
- *Sources for Public Drinking Water – High*
- *Diversity of Plant and Animal Communities*
 - *Properly Functioning Condition Situation – Low to medium*
 - *Invasive Plant Species – Low*
 - *TESCP Species and Species Evaluated for Viability*
 - *Animals – High*
 - *Plants – Medium to High*
 - *Fish metapopulations – Low*
- *Primitive and Semi-Primitive Classes of Recreation – High*
- *Reference Landscape – N/A*
- *Landscape Character and Scenic Integrity – High*
- *Heritage Resources – High*
- *Other Unique Characteristics – Low*
- *Size and Context – Medium*

The project will improve conditions by establishing a single route for trail users and further limit illegal motorized travel and associated disturbance.

The proposed western addition to the Mount Timpanogos Wilderness Area is about 10 miles to the northeast of the trail segment (2003 Forest Plan, p 5-22). Construction of this trail will have no effect on that area recommended for wilderness designation.

5. Need to address requirements of the Endangered Species Act (ESA Section 7); possible need for an Environmental Assessment. Will the project have significant impacts to extraordinary circumstances?

The Biological Evaluation and Biological Assessment prepared for this project document the lack of habitat and species occurrences of threatened, endangered, and sensitive species.

As listed in section “5. Decision” below, the project will have no impacts to the extraordinary circumstances that would require preparation of an environmental assessment or an environmental impact statement.

6. Spread of invasive plant species. Spread of invasive plant species and noxious weeds as a result of ground disturbing activities. Recommendation to conduct an inventory and map invasive species in and near the DCA.

Appropriate mitigation consistent with the 2003 Forest Plan for control of existing and prevention of new infestations will be implemented (e.g., treat invading noxious weeds for

at least three years after a project is completed – Standard Weeds-10, p 3-16; spray or remove weeds prior to ground-disturbing activities – Guideline Weeds-12, p 3-16; implement mitigation for all projects to prevent establishment of noxious weeds – Guideline Weeds-15, p 3-16). Motorized vehicles are one of the primary sources for weed seed distribution. Reducing illegal OHV use in the area through barriers will reduce the transfer of noxious weeds.

5. DECISION

I have decided to implement reconstruction and construction of the 1.6 mile Lindon-Dry Canyon Bonneville Shoreline Trail section.

This action is categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement or an environmental assessment because the project is listed as one of the excluded categories in FSH 1909.15. The Forest Service Handbook states that "a proposed action may be categorically excluded from documentation . . . only if the proposed action . . . is within a category listed in section 31.1 b or 31.2; and there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action" (FSH 1909.15, 30.3 (I)). This project is described at FSH 1909.15, 31.2 (1), Construction and reconstruction of trails.

FSH 1909.15, Section 30.3 (WO Interim 1909.15-2002-2) lists the following extraordinary circumstances:

- a. Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species. No occurrences or habitat for any threatened, endangered, or sensitive species are present in the Lindon-Dry Canyon Bonneville Shoreline Trail project area (Biological Assessment, 2004; Biological Evaluation, 2004).
- b. Floodplains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds. The project will have no adverse impact on municipal watersheds and should result in improvements in watershed conditions. The new trail segment is not located in, nor would it have any negative direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts on, any floodplains or wetlands.
- c. Congressionally designated areas such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or national recreation areas. The project area is not located in, nor would the project have any negative direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts on, any congressionally designated areas.
- d. Inventoried roadless areas. About 1/3 mile of the trail will be located in the southwestern edge of Mount Timpanogos Roadless Area; however, it will not have any negative effects on the roadless or wilderness characteristics of the area as described above in section 4, item 4.
- e. Research Natural Areas. The project area is not located in, nor would it have any effects on, the sole Research Natural Area located on the Forest on the Heber Ranger District.
- f. American Indian and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites. Based on site investigations and scoping, the project area is not known to include, nor would the project have any effects on, any American Indian or Alaska Native religious or cultural sites (Utah State Historic Preservation Office, June 14, 2004; Thompson, July 19, 2004).
- g. Archeological sites or historic properties or areas. There are no known archeological sites

or historic properties or areas located in the project area, therefore, there would be no impacts as a result of this project (Utah State Historic Preservation Office, June 14, 2004; Thompson, July 19, 2004).

6. FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS

This decision is consistent with the Uinta National Forest's 2003 Forest Plan as required by the National Forest Management Act. This new portion of the Bonneville Shoreline Trail will be located in the Lower Provo Management Area entirely within management prescriptions 3.2, Watershed Emphasis, and 7.0, Wildland Urban Interface (the 7.0 prescription overlays the 3.2 prescription). The entire trail area is located in a Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) class. The trail will be located in two different Visual Quality Objective classes: Partial Retention and Retention. The project is consistent with Forest-wide and Management Area specific direction as described below.

- “By 2018, complete construction of those sections of the Bonneville Shoreline Trail that are on National Forest System lands.” **Objective-6-5, 2003 Forest Plan, page 2-20.**
- “By 2018, acquire land and rights-of-way to complete the Bonneville Shoreline Trail within the proclaimed Forest boundary.” **Objective-7-3, 2003 Forest Plan, page 2-21.**
- “An integrated trail system that provides a variety of recreational opportunities is identified through a trail travel management plan. This system incorporates the Great Western and Bonneville Shoreline Trails.” **Sub-goal 6-8, 2003 Forest Plan, page 2-19.**
- “The Bonneville Shoreline Trail on National Forest System lands will be a multipurpose, non-motorized trail. Trail sections on other jurisdictions may have differing restrictions.” **Standard Rec-10, 2003 Forest Plan, page 3-30.**
- “Non-beneficial and/or unauthorized roads and trails are decommissioned, obliterated, or rehabilitated if they do not meet resource objectives or provide necessary access to facilities or inholdings.” **Sub-goal-8-4, 2003 Forest Plan, page 2-22.**
- “By 2018, decommission, obliterate, or rehabilitate at least 25 to 30 miles of non-beneficial and/or unauthorized roads and trails as identified through the transportation analysis.” **Objective-8-4, 2003 Forest Plan, page 2-23.**
- “Dispersed recreation opportunities are offered in areas close to urban centers, with an emphasis on a full range of trail opportunities.” **Sub-goal-6-3, 2003 Forest Plan, page 2-18.**
- “Diverse and suitable recreational opportunities are provided responsive to public demand while maintaining ecosystem health and contributing to social and economic sustainability.” **Forest-wide Goal 6, 2003 Forest Plan, page 2-18.**
- “Designated, hardened, dispersed recreational facilities may be developed to concentrate use and reduce resource impacts to the biophysical resources.” **Guideline Rec-15, 2003 Forest Plan, page 3-31.**

There are no floodplains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds within the project area, therefore, none of these areas will be impacted. The project site is located away from streams and springs and will not impact water quality. The decision is consistent with the Clean Water Act.

There are no occurrences of or habitat for any threatened, endangered, or sensitive species the

project area. A Biological Evaluation for the project completed in April 2004 determined that there was no suitable habitat for any Forest Service sensitive species in the project area. A Biological Assessment completed for this project in April 2004 made determinations of “no effect” for the threatened and endangered species for Utah County. This decision is consistent with the Endangered Species Act.

No adverse impacts on birds are anticipated. This decision is consistent with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Trail construction and reconstruction activities are scheduled so as not to coincide with critical breeding seasons for migratory birds.

No cultural resources will be affected by the project. The decision is consistent with the National Historic Preservation Act, the American Indian Religious Freedom Act, and the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act.

In accordance with Executive Order 12898, this action will not result in any disproportionate impact to minority or low-income populations.

Implementation of this proposal is consistent with other Federal, State, and local laws for the protection of the environment.

7. IMPLEMENTATION DATE

This decision may be implemented immediately.

8. ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW OR APPEAL OPPORTUNITIES

Pursuant to 36 CFR 215.8 (a)(4), this decision is not subject to a higher level of review or appeal.

9. CONTACT PERSON

For further information about this decision or project, please contact John Hendrix, Natural Resources Staff, Pleasant Grove Ranger District, at 390 North 100 East, Pleasant Grove, Utah, 84062, or by phone at (801) 785-3563.

/s/ Pamela J. Gardner

Pamela J. Gardner
District Ranger
Pleasant Grove Ranger District

August 16, 2004

Date