



File Code: 1950/2500

Date: April 12, 2004

Dear Forest Interest:

The Uinta National Forest is proposing a watershed restoration project in the Dry Canyon area of the Pleasant Grove Ranger District. The project area is located about two miles east of the city of Lindon, Utah. The project area contains about 330 acres. About 200 acres of the project area were recently acquired by the Forest Service through a purchase via Trust for Public Lands. The proposal is to reclaim about 13 miles of user-created two-track roads/trails.

The Bonneville Shoreline Trail passes through this area. A separate proposal is being analyzed that would identify one or more sections of these user-created roads/trails to be retained and improved as a part of the Bonneville Shoreline Trail. Those portions identified for inclusion as part of the Bonneville Shoreline Trail would not be rehabilitated as part of these watershed restoration activities. However, actions would be taken to improve the tread and reduce future erosion potential.

A detailed description of the purpose and need for this project and the specific actions being proposed are listed below. Your input will help direct and define issues, alternatives considered, and the analysis of environmental effects associated with this proposal. To be most helpful, comments should identify specific issues and concerns with the proposed action. Valid issues and concerns are not factored or weighted by numbers of people or organizations submitting them. This process and decision is not based on popular vote, but by the soundness of the analysis and the information that it incorporates. However, all comments will be addressed.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION

Forest Service officials are initiating environmental analysis for proposed watershed improvements to be known as the Dry Canyon Watershed Restoration Project on National Forest System lands. The project location is about two miles east of the city of Lindon, Utah, in portions of Sections 26, 35 and 36, Township 5 South, Range 2 East, Salt Lake Base Meridian, and totals about 330 acres. The proposal is to reclaim about 13 miles of user-created two-track roads/trails. Activities associated with this proposal include:

1. Scarify non-system trail/road surfaces to prepare a suitable seedbed for seeding and establishing native vegetation (grasses and forbs) on disturbed sites to slow water run-off and reduce off-site soil deposition. It is anticipated that two miles of the estimated 13 miles of unclassified roads/trails would be obliterated annually until the project is completed. Annual restoration activities would be dependant on the available funding for this project or other funding sources if they become available.



2. Create drainage berms and ditches to divert runoff from the most prominent and erosive non-system roads/trails thereby reducing the impact of water-created soil erosion.
3. Barricade unauthorized motorized entry points within the project area where access onto National Forest System lands from adjacent lands currently contributes to impacts within the project area. A combination of barrier rock and post-and-pole fencing would be used to prevent unauthorized motorized (OHV) activities.
4. Post signs stating the treatment area is closed to unauthorized motorized use in order to limit site disturbance, soil erosion, enhance vegetation establishment. Closure would also facilitate improving big game winter range conditions in this area.
5. Collect and remove litter and trash to improve the visual quality of the project area and demonstrate responsible land ethics.

Because Lindon City has culinary water collection, transmission and storage facilities within and adjacent to the project area, *authorized* motorized access would be permitted under an existing special-use permit, but access would be limited to designated routes.

The Utah Division of Wildlife Resources owns land adjacent to the project area and desires to work as a cooperator in the implementation of this proposed project by conducting similar reclamation activities on their property as well.

BACKGROUND

The proposed project area is comprised of two separate parcels of land. *Parcel I* encompasses about 200 acres acquired by the Uinta National Forest on March 31, 2003, from Trust for Public Land – Utah. This parcel, known as the Canberra-Dry Canyon Acquisition, provides access to Dry Canyon, Mt. Timpanogos Wilderness Area, other general forest areas of the Uinta National Forest, and Timpanogos State Wildlife Management Area (Utah State Division of Wildlife Resources).

Parcel II is located directly north and adjacent to *Parcel I*, and totals about 130 acres. This parcel was impacted by the Big Baldy Fire in 1987, and much of the area was closed to motorized access following that incident. In 1988 and 1989, the dozer lines established during fire suppression efforts were waterbarred and re-seeded in an effort to protect and restore the watershed. Wooden post-and-pole fencing was installed to restrict motorized access and the area signed as *Closed to Motorized Activities*.

In the following years, OHV operators began traveling from the only road open to adjacent areas. These activities resulted in expansion of user-created roads/trails throughout the project area, effectively reopening previously closed dozer lines within the Big Baldy Fire. As a result, the area is crisscrossed with two-track roads/trails created by this unauthorized motorized activity.

THE IMPACTS BEING ADDRESSED

The unauthorized motorized vehicle activity has created about 13 miles of user-created roads/trails. (This estimate is based on aerial photos; actual miles needing rehabilitation may be higher. Ground surveys will be conducted to verify the miles of rehabilitation needed.) On steep, erodible slopes, this type of activity, along with water run-off, has created extensive soil erosion. Loss of soil has made it difficult for native vegetation to establish on areas damaged during the Big Baldy Fire. Establishment and expansion of noxious weed infestations, especially where vehicles have traveled from private land infested with yellow star thistle into the area, is a concern. Additionally, wildlife harassment, especially during the winter months, is compounded by illegal off-road vehicle use.

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION

The *Purpose* of the proposed action is to address the *Impacts* as identified above. The *Need* for the proposed action is:

1. To meet the desired condition of a healthy, productive watershed, thereby reducing the possibility of soil erosion originating on the disturbed land within the Dry Canyon Watershed Restoration Project area.
2. To limit the effects of unmanaged off-road/off trail motorized recreational vehicle use.

PRELIMINARY ISSUES

Issues initially identified during development of the proposed action include:

1. What NEPA actions, if any, are required for rehabilitation of the unclassified, illegal two-track roads/trails that exist on the newly acquired Dry Canyon property and those that exist on adjacent NFS lands?
2. What effects, if any, might there be on cultural resources in the area from implementation of the proposed action?
3. Continued motorized use within this area is inconsistent with the 2003 Forest Plan direction. The 2003 Forest Plan classifies the area within which the project area lies as being in a semi-primitive non-motorized recreation opportunity spectrum. "The Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) class is closed to motorized use including over-the-snow vehicles." (2003 Forest Plan, Page 3-35, ROS-2)
4. Unmanaged off-road/off-trail OHV use is impacting the visual quality along the Wasatch Front. The Visual Quality Objective for the project area is partial retention. Within areas to be managed for partial retention, Forest Plan direction states, "Management activities remain visually subordinate to the characteristic landscape. Management activities should repeat form, line, color, or texture common to the characteristic landscape; . . ."

(2003 Forest Plan, Glossary - 33). What effects, if any, would there be on the area's visual resources as a result of implementation of the proposed action?

HOW CAN YOU BE INVOLVED?

Send substantive comments relative to this proposal to the Responsible Official for this project, Pam Gardner, Uinta National Forest, Pleasant Grove District Ranger, 390 N 100 E, Pleasant Grove, UT 84062; phone 801-342-5241; or you may hand deliver your comments during normal business hours from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday, excluding federal holidays. Email comments may be sent to comments-intermtn-uinta-pleasantgrove@fs.fed.us. The opportunity to comment ends 30 days following the date of publication of the legal notice for this project in the *Provo Daily Herald*. Your comments need to be as specific as possible and contain the following:

1. Your name, address, and (if possible) telephone number;
2. Title of the document(s) on which comment is being submitted; and
3. Specific facts or comments along with supporting reasons that the person believes the Responsible Official should consider in reaching a decision.

SCHEDULE FOR COMPLETION OF ANALYSIS

- Scoping and public review and comment on the proposed action would begin with publication of a legal notice in the Provo Daily Herald, and end 30 days later.
- The environmental analysis is tentatively scheduled to be completed and appropriate decisions made in the late spring or early summer of 2004.

Thank you for your interest in management of the Uinta National Forest. If you have questions regarding this proposal, please contact Marlene DePietro, District Natural Resources Staff, at the Pleasant Grove Ranger District at the address above, or by phone at 801-342-5244.

Sincerely,

/s/ Pamela J. Gardner
PAMELA J. GARDNER
Pleasant Grove District Ranger

[Enclosure \(map of Dry Canyon Area and user-created trails\)](#)