

Decision Memo

Utah Communications Agency Network (UCAN) Beaver Mountain Communications Site Special Use Permit Authorization

Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest
Logan Ranger District
Cache County, Utah

Decision

I have decided to authorize a special use permit for the construction, operation, and maintenance of a non-commercial communication site on National Forest System (NFS) land directly adjacent to the Beaver Mountain Ski Area. The communication site will be located on Beaver Mountain (elev. 8853) in T14N, R3E, Section 13. Vehicle access is provided by existing ski area roads; no new roads will be constructed. The site was previously disturbed before this parcel of land was acquired by the Forest Service in a State land trade in 1998.

The facility will be owned and operated under a term special use permit issued to the Utah Communications Agency Network (UCAN). The non-commercial communication site and facility will be used to house public safety two-way radio equipment used by Federal, State, County, and Local Public Safety/Public Service agencies traveling through the Logan Canyon area.

Public safety agencies Cache County and Logan City are converting their communications systems to 800 MHz and a new communications site in upper Logan Canyon is critical. The Beaver Mountain site is strategically located in upper Logan Canyon and overlooks Highway 89 toward Logan, Highway 89 up towards the summit, and the Franklin Basin area. This site is the best (if not only) location in the area to accomplish the needed coverage for public safety/public service radio communications. The site will provide critical communications links during emergencies, such as search and rescues and other law enforcement actions.

The overall size of the project site will be approximately 100' x 100' (less than 1 acre). The project will minimize grading and use on-site graded material to level the spot for the building's concrete pad. The equipment building will be approximately 12' x 14' x 9' high, made of pre-fabricated material in a color that will blend in with the natural surroundings. The facility will be solar-powered with a small back-up propane generator on site. The communication site will include a 40-foot, stand-alone tower (no guy wires) to accommodate the radio antennas.

Mitigation Measures

The following mitigation measures included as part of the decision are intended to reduce or avoid environmental impacts from the proposed project.

1. The facility will be designed to blend in with the surrounding vegetation to minimize visibility.
2. All equipment used in the construction of the communication site will be washed before entering the area, to prevent the introduction of noxious weeds.

Scoping and Public Involvement

On August 6, 2008, information on the proposal was provided in a scoping notice mailed to 130 individuals, organizations, and agencies on the District mailing list and posted on the Forest website at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r4/wcnf/projects/proposed>. A 30-day scoping period was provided. The project was also included in the Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA) data base.

The District received 2 comment letters in response to the scoping efforts. One commented in favor of all four of the proposed projects. The other respondent had no objections to the proposed UCAN communication site as long as the footprint for the site was surveyed for TES species and none were found. In making my decision, I considered the comments and concerns of respondents and Forest Service interdisciplinary team members (see below).

Reason for Categorically Excluding the Proposed Action

Based on public input, interdisciplinary team review, past experience, and consideration of the resource conditions listed below, I have determined the effects of implementing this action will be of limited context and intensity and will result in little or no environmental effect to either the physical or biological components of the environment. As such, this is a decision that has been categorically excluded from documentation in an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement.

The proposed action falls under 36 CFR Part 220 and Forest Service Handbook 1909.15 - Environmental Policy and Procedures Handbook, Chapter 30, Section 31.2 Category 3 – Approval modification, or continuation of minor special uses of NFS lands that require less than five contiguous acres of land. The categorical exclusion is appropriate in this situation because there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action. There were no significant effects identified for the resource conditions listed below.

a. Federally listed threatened and endangered species or designated critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species. The wildlife biologist has reviewed the proposal and has determined there will be “no effect” to any threatened and endangered wildlife species or designated critical habitat and “no impact” to any Forest Service sensitive wildlife species because there is no suitable habitat present, the species are not found within the project area, and/or the scope of the project is limited and within a previously disturbed environment. The fisheries biologist has determined there will be “no effect” to any threatened and endangered aquatic species or designated critical habitat and “no impact” to any Forest Service sensitive aquatic species because the species are not found in or near the project area. The forest botanist has surveyed the project area has determined there will be “no effect” to any threatened and endangered plant species or designated critical habitat and “no impact” to any Forest Service sensitive plant species because either suitable habitat is not provided, the plants are not found here, and/or the project is limited in scope and within previously disturbed areas. Therefore, the project will have no effect on any T,E,S species or critical habitat.

b. Flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds. The forest soil scientist and forest hydrologist have reviewed the proposal and have determined the project is not located within any flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds, and therefore, will have no effect on any of these features.

c. Congressionally designated areas, such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or National Recreation Areas. The communications site is not located within a congressionally designated area and therefore, will not have any effect on any such designated area.

d. Inventoried roadless areas. The communication site is located directly adjacent to the Beaver Mountain Ski Area. Although it is within the Gibson roadless area, vehicle access to the site will use

existing ski area roads. No new roads will be constructed. Therefore, this project will have no effect on inventoried roadless areas, roadless area values, or roadless character.

e. Research Natural Areas. The site is not located within a Research Natural Area and therefore, will not have any effect on any RNA.

f. American Indian and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites. The Forest archaeologist has visited the proposed site and has determined that no such religious or cultural sites will be affected by installation of the UCAN communications site.

g. Archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas. The Forest archaeologist has visited the proposed communication site and has determined that no archaeological sites or historic properties or areas will be affected by this project.

Findings Required by Other Laws

This decision is consistent with the Revised Forest Plan as required by the National Forest Management Act. The project was designed in conformance with forest plan standards and incorporates appropriate Forest Plan guidelines. Nothing in the Revised Forest Plan precludes the addition of this communications site (page 4-55). The project is consistent with the desired future conditions as described in the Forest Plan. The site is located within the Cache Box Elder Management Area (Forest Plan, pages 4-128 to 4-139).

Administrative Appeal Opportunity and Implementation

This decision pursuant to 36 CFR 215.12(f) is not subject to appeal and may be implemented immediately.

Contact Person

For additional information concerning this decision, contact Jennefer Parker, District Ranger, 1500 East Highway 89, Logan, Utah 84321, (435-755-3620).

/s/Brian Ferebee
BRIAN FEREBEE
Forest Supervisor

October 22, 2008

Date

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotope, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.