



Scoping Document

Christmas Meadows Recreation Residence Permit Issuances

USDA Forest Service
Wasatch-Cache National Forest
Evanston/Mountain View
Ranger District
Summit County, Utah

Comments Due: March 12, 2007

February 7, 2007

Purpose of this scoping document

Through this letter you are invited to comment on our proposal to authorize continued recreation residence use on the Christmas Meadows Recreation Residence Tract. Part of this proposal includes authorizing continued existing off-lot improvements associated with the recreation residences including the road, gate, bridge, water system, horse corral, hay storage area, and other miscellaneous improvements. These associated improvements are included in a permit to the Christmas Meadows Homeowner Association. This notice contains background information about these recreational residences and associated improvements and the Forest Service environmental review process. Information about this proposal is also posted on the Forest Service web site at: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r4/wcnf/projects/>.

What is being proposed?

The Forest Service proposes to authorize continued recreation residence use for 40 lots and associated improvements as described above in the Christmas Meadows Recreation Residence Tract for a 20-year period, beginning on January 1, 2009. As a part of this proposal, some permit holders in the tract are required to undertake measures to bring their recreational residences into compliance with their permit. The location of the tract is shown on the attached map. If continued use is approved, the lots and associated improvements would be administered according to the *Recreation Residence Management Administrative Guidelines for the Wasatch-Cache National Forest* (revised February 1, 2006).

Why are we proposing this project?

Existing permits will expire December 31, 2008. Issuance of new permits is a two-step process. The first step is a *consistency review*, comparing conditions at each tract with the 2003 Revised Wasatch-Cache National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan). The Forest Plan stated in Guideline 82 that the Christmas Meadows recreation residence tract will continue to be allocated as a special use development area (Forest Plan, page 4-54). In September 2005, a National Forest Recreation Residence Consistency Review and Findings was completed for the Christmas Meadows tract and it was determined that they currently are consistent with the Forest Plan, or that modifications could be undertaken to make them so. The second step in the process is referred to as the *continuation determination*, which will culminate in a decision whether or not to authorize continued use of the recreation residences. This public notice initiates an environmental analysis, which will be used to help make the *continuation determination*.

Background

The recreation residence program was started by the Forest Service in the early 1900s as a way to encourage public use of the National Forests. Currently there are 14,285 recreation residences operated under special use permits, located in 53 National Forests in the Western United States. Recreation residences are homes and associated facilities that are owned and maintained by private individuals, but located on National Forest System land and authorized by a special use permit.

Recreation residences are a valid use of National Forest System lands and are an important component of the overall National Forest recreation program. It is Forest Service policy to continue recreation residence use and to work in partnership with holders of these permits to maximize the recreational benefits of these residences (FSM 2347.1). At the same time there is recognition that the program will not grow significantly larger. Locally, the Wasatch-Cache National Forest Plan states in Standard 29 that there will be “no net increase in the number of recreation residences” (Forest Plan, page 4-53).

The Christmas Meadows recreation residence tract is located on the Evanston-Mountain View Ranger District of the Wasatch-Cache National Forest in Summit County, Utah. The tract includes 40 lots that are authorized under current term permits expiring on December 31, 2008. The tract is accessed using the Mirror Lake Highway (U-150) from Kamas, Utah or Evanston, Wyoming, and the Stillwater Fork/Christmas Meadows Road (FS 057). The general area includes Township 1N Range 10E Sections 9, 10, 15, 16, and 22. The tract was established around 1955. There are no in-lieu lots and current policy is for no additional lots or in-lieu lots to be established for this tract. The area authorized under the current recreation residence special use permits totals approximately 26 acres for the lots. Additional acreage is located between the existing lots and for the road system that serves the lots. The tract is located around 8,800 feet in elevation in aspen/mixed conifer vegetation. Developed areas nearby include the Bear River Ranger Station, several campgrounds, and system trails. The Mirror Lake Highway area receives high year-round developed and dispersed public recreation use including camping, hiking and site seeing in the summer and snowmobiling and cross-country skiing in the winter. The lower elevation section of highway is closed for regular vehicle traffic from early December to the middle of May. Most of the use in the tract occurs from June to October. Existing off-lot improvements associated with recreation residences include roads, gates, water systems and some other miscellaneous structures. These are listed under a permit to the homeowner association.

Environmental Review Process

A preliminary assessment suggests that the project falls within a category of action listed in the Forest Service Environmental Policy and Procedures Handbook 1909.15, Section 31.2 (15), *“Issuance of a new special use authorization for a new term to replace an existing or expired authorization when the only changes are administrative, there are no changes to the authorized facilities or increases in the scope or intensity of authorized facilities, and the applicant or holder is in full compliance with the terms and conditions of the special use authorization.”*

Projects under this category may be excluded from documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Further analysis will be conducted to determine if any extraordinary circumstances exist that would preclude use of the category. This comment period provides those interested in or affected by this proposal an opportunity to make their concerns known prior to a decision being made by the Forest Supervisor who is the Responsible Official for this decision.

Preliminary Issues

At this time, no preliminary issues or concerns have been identified. Your comments will help us focus the analysis on the most important environmental issues and concerns.

Public Involvement

Comments should be received by **March 12, 2007** and should include your name, address, and telephone number. To be most useful, your comments should include concerns you believe we should consider before reaching a decision on the proposed project. Comments received will become part of the public record and may be made available to others upon request.

Comments should be directed to:

Stephen Ryberg, District Ranger, P.O. Box 1880, Evanston, WY 82931.

Electronic comments should be submitted in rich text format (.rtf), or Word (.doc) to: comments-intermtn-wasatch-cache-evanston-mtnview@fs.fed.us.

For more information please contact Earl O'Driscoll at (307) 789-3194 or by email at: eodriscoll@fs.fed.us. Thank you for your interest in the management of the Wasatch-Cache National Forest.

Sincerely,

/s/ Stephen M. Ryberg

STEPHEN M. RYBERG
District Ranger

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