



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Uinta National Forest
88 West 100 North
Provo, UT 84601

Wasatch-Cache National Forest
125 South State Street
Federal Building, Room 8236
Salt Lake City, Utah 84138

File Code: 1950/5570

Date: January 20, 2009

Dear Interested Party,

This letter is to inform you that the Salt Lake Ranger District is initiating an environmental analysis. The project will likely be categorically excluded from documentation (CE) as provided in 36 CFR 220.6. In general, a categorical exclusion of a proposed action may be used when there are no significant effects, no adverse effects to extraordinary circumstances and the proposal fits one of the listed categories. The Mount Olympus Administrative Site Conveyance would likely fall within a category of actions that do not require preparation of an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement. The conditions governing use of this categorical exclusion include the following: "Sale or exchange of land or interest in land and resources where resulting land uses remain essentially the same (36 CFR 220.6 (d) (7))". We welcome your comments, concerns, and suggestions regarding this proposal.

What is being proposed?

The Forest proposes to sell approximately 5.75 acres of federal land managed by the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest directly to Salt Lake County. Salt Lake County would retain the property as "open space" accessible to the public. The County would utilize portions of the parcel to accommodate a short section of the proposed Bonneville Shoreline Trail (BST) that would extend through the area and an associated small trailhead parking lot. The proposed BST alignment plan in Salt Lake County is currently under environmental review and this proposed land sale would have no effect on the trail alignment proposal decision. The County would purchase the property for fair market value. The money received from the sale of the property to Salt Lake County would be used to fund construction of a new office building for the Salt Lake Ranger District. An agency owned building is projected to save operations dollars (over the current leased facilities).

The property is located along the National Forest boundary and within a residential area known as Olympus Cove. This is a portion of unincorporated Salt Lake County. The property is located at about 4900 Mile High Drive and is configured as a triangle (Figures 1 and 2). The north side of the triangle is bordered by a residential area and the west side by undeveloped private property with other homes about 500 feet further to the west. The third side of the parcel adjoins undeveloped National Forest land and roughly parallels Mile High Drive and provides access to two homes at the end of this paved street.

Why are we proposing this project?

From approximately the 1950's to 1970's, the Mount Olympus Administrative Site was utilized by the Forest Service to store explosives used in avalanche control and trail and road maintenance work on the National Forest. In the early 1970's, the site was abandoned and is no longer in use today for administrative purposes. Explosives materials are now stored in secure locations elsewhere on National Forest or private lands closer to where they would be used. All that remains of the existing structure on the site are remnants of the foundations of several buildings.



The parcel is situated in an area that is difficult to manage for National Forest purposes. With residential developments on two sides and located near the end of dead end street, the parcel has the appearance of a vacant lot and has become somewhat of a dumping ground for discarded household items, trash, and yard waste. While this can be cleaned up, the property's boundaries relative to the residential area and Mile High Drive make it likely that these will be persistent problems. The property is used to some extent by neighbors for hiking, dog walking, and is enjoyed for its open space values. However, the parcel's small size, juxtaposition with residential development, and lack of shade and water make it unattractive for larger scale recreation purposes.

For more than 30 years, the Salt Lake Ranger District has operated out of leased office and warehouse facilities in Cottonwood Heights (6944 South 3000 East). These facilities are inadequate for current Forest Service needs, particularly in providing adequate shop and warehouse space, and storage for fire engines and related equipment. In addition, the facility has extremely limited parking for employees and visitors. In 2008, lease cost for these facilities was \$110,000. The sale of excess administrative sites could provide much needed funding for building new government-owned facilities that would substantially reduce costs over the long term.

Construction of Forest Service facilities can be funded through several means. The most common is method is by using funds appropriated by Congress for making capital investments for Forest Service facilities. In 2005, Congress passed the Forest Service Facilities Realignment and Enhancement Act (FSFREA). This legislation gave the agency the authority to sell or exchange administrative land and associated facilities and retain the proceeds for "the acquisition, improvement, maintenance, reconstruction, or construction" of other Forest Service facilities. The Act requires that any proposal to convey administrative sites be analyzed under provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA). The passage of FSFREA provides another method that can be used to construct government-owned administrative facilities on the National Forest.

Preliminary Issues

An interdisciplinary team of Forest Service resource specialists reviewed the proposal and visited the site and have developed a list of resources to assess in evaluating the impacts of this proposal, the team will consider:

1. Potential effects to the environment at this location and the surrounding area (including water quality, wildlife, vegetation, soil, cultural resources, and federally listed species)
2. Potential effects on scenery and aesthetics in the area, including impacts to the Mount Olympus Wilderness
3. Potential effects on recreation access to the BST and effects to homeowners in the area

At this time, no adverse effects have been identified because the use of the area would remain essentially unchanged with this proposed conveyance.

What is the Decision to be made?

FSFREA requires the Forest Service to apply the NEPA process to any conveyances proposed under its authority. In instituting that requirement, Section 504 of the Act requires the Forest Service to: (a) analyze only the most reasonably foreseeable use of the administrative site; (b) determine whether or not to reserve any right, title, or interest in the administrative site; and (c) evaluate the alternative of not conveying the administrative site. The decisions to be made are:

- Whether or not to convey the administrative site out of federal ownership by a direct sale to Salt Lake County.
- Whether to reserve an interest in any portion of the property for National Forest purposes.

Brian Ferebee, Forest Supervisor of the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest, will be the responsible official.

How can I comment?

With this scoping document, the Forest Service is soliciting public input on the proposal to help identify any specific environmental issues and concerns that should be considered in our environmental review under NEPA. Consistent with Forest Service regulations, this decision would not be subject to administrative appeal (36 CFR 215.12(f)).

Comments on this proposal must be received by **February 20, 2009**. Written comments are being accepted by District Ranger Cathy Kahlow, on behalf of the Responsible Official, Forest Supervisor Brian Ferebee. Electronic comments must be submitted in a format such as an email message, rich text format (.rtf) or Word (.doc) to comments-intermtn-wasatch-cache-saltlake@fs.fed.us, or submit comments to:

Salt Lake Ranger District
Wasatch-Cache National Forest
6944 South 3000 East
Salt Lake City, Utah 84121
(Fax number 801-733-2684)

Business office hours for hand-delivered comments are 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. For more information, please contact Cathy Kahlow, District Ranger, at the Salt Lake Ranger District, 801-733-2675 or ckahlow@fs.fed.us. Thank you for your interest in the management of National Forest System lands.

Sincerely,

/s/ David R. Myers (for):

BRIAN FEREBEE
Forest Supervisor

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Figure 1: Mt. Olympus Administrative Site: Vicinity Map

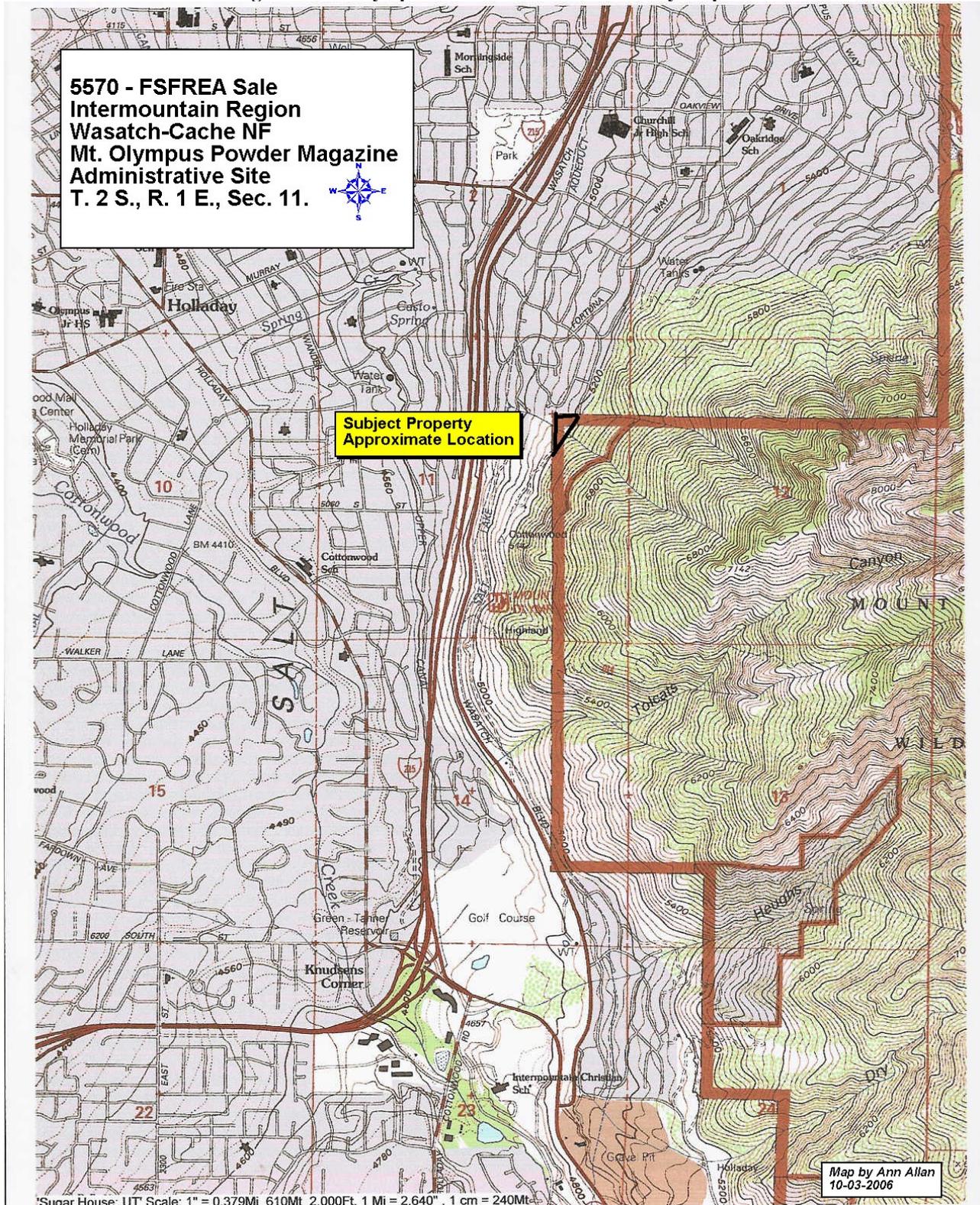


Figure 2: Mt. Olympus Administrative Site

