



**File Code:** 1950/2720

**Date:** March 26, 2009

Dear Interested Citizens:

The Sisters Ranger District is seeking your concerns, questions and suggestions on a proposal to issue a Special Use Permit for winter backcountry huts and guide services to Three Sisters Backcountry Inc.

The Forest Service selected Three Sisters Backcountry Inc. as the successful applicant to provide this service through a competitive process in January 2009. This process was used due to high public interest in the proposal. Three Sisters Backcountry Inc. is funding the environmental analysis through cost recovery. Three Sisters Backcountry Inc. is located in Sisters, Oregon.

### **Purpose and Need of the Project**

The **purpose and need** is to provide guided winter recreation services in accordance with the Deschutes National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan and other applicable regulations and direction. In order to provide these services to the public it is necessary to utilize National Forest System lands.

### **Proposed Action**

It is proposed to provide a winter backcountry recreation experience using temporary huts and guide services. The winter guide service would operate between November and April. Three Sisters Backcountry Inc. would provide winter non-motorized guide service for backcountry skiing, snowshoeing and snowboarding as well as training and safety courses for avalanche, winter alpine skills, and backcountry skiing. They would offer interpretive tours, and clinics on Nordic skiing techniques. All proposed activities would take place only on the Sisters Ranger District.

Three Sisters Backcountry Inc would provide overnight lodging in temporary structures. The lodging would be full service and rentals. Full service yurt lodging would include meal service. Their proposal consists of providing two 20 foot diameter yurts and a portable wood fired sauna. The huts would be supplied by snowmobile to bring in water, food, supplies and in some instances customers. One yurt would be for sleeping and the other for cooking and living space. Each structure will be wood heated and have propane for cooking and melting snow for water.

The yurts would be located at the Three Creeks Campground, in the area just across from the first toilets. Three Sisters Backcountry Inc. is proposing to utilize the existing pit toilets under an agreement with Hoodoo Recreation who has the Campground Concessionaire permit.

The area of backcountry travel would consist of existing Nordic trails from the Upper Three Creeks Snopark to Three Creeks Lake and a portion of the Three Sisters



Wilderness north of Tam McArthur Rim on the Sisters Ranger District. Snowmobile use would not be allowed in the Three Sisters Wilderness. See the enclosed Location Map for details.

The special use permit will allow up to 500 service days. A Service Day is equal to 1 client a day or any part of a day on National Forest system lands for which an outfitter or guide provides goods or services including transportation to a client. The guide estimates that about 50% of the use will be for guiding and instruction, the remaining half will be for yurt rental.

Group size would be limited to 12 total persons in the wilderness including guides and clients. Group size at the huts is limited by sleeping space to 8 people.

### **Environmental Analysis**

The Sisters Ranger District will document the environmental affects of the Proposed Action. The level of environmental analysis will depend on the issues raised during the public scoping and the environmental analysis process. At this time we believe the project can be documented using a categorical exclusion (FSH 1909.15-31.12 (8)).

### **Public Scoping**

You are invited to comment on this proposed action. Your comments are important to us and will help us to identify any significant issues associated with the proposed action. Please have your comments to us by **May 8, 2009**. Comments should be mailed to Jeff Sims, Project Leader, Sisters Ranger District, P.O. Box 249, Sisters, OR 97759 or via e-mail: [jsims@fs.fed.us](mailto:jsims@fs.fed.us). Comments should include your name and address. For additional information, please contact Jeff Sims at (541) 549-7706.

Thank you for your interest in natural resource management on the Sisters Ranger District.

Sincerely,

*/s/ Craig R. Letz (for)*

WILLIAM ANTHONY  
District Ranger

Enclosure: Location Map