



File Code: 1950-3

Date: January 27, 2009

Dear interested citizen:

The Crescent Ranger District on the Deschutes National Forest is proposing a designated Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) trail system. In addition, the proposal would close roads, rehabilitate unneeded trails, and develop staging areas within the 77,000 acre **Three Trails OHV project area (Map 1)**. The public has been involved in shaping this proposal and over 100 people have participated. The interdisciplinary team has collaborated locally and in the communities of Eugene and Klamath Falls to identify what a trail system should include.

Trail locations on the map are approximate to allow for site-specific design that will match the terrain to site-specific conditions. The analysis area contains three distinct areas with a focused trail system that will eventually be interconnected: Two Rivers, Walker Mountain, and Crescent Lake Junction; it is located in all or parts of the following sections:

T23S, R6E, Sec. 36; T23S, R7E, Sec. 31-35;

T24S, R6E, Sec. 1, 2, 4-13, 24, 25, 36; T24S, R7E, Sec. 2-11, 12-24, 26-35;

T25S, R7E, Sec. 2-11, 12-24, 26-35; T25S, R8E, Sec. 19, 29-32; T25S R9E Sec. 20-23, 28-32;

T26S, R7E, Sec. 1-4, 9-15, 24,25,36; T26S, R8E Sec 1-36, T26S, R9E, Sec 6.

The need for this site-specific proposal is basically a result of a much larger process all National Forests are implementing; the Travel Management Rule. In 2005, the Forest Service codified a national rule that prohibits motorized travel off of designated routes. The Deschutes National Forest is currently in the process of developing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to display the environmental effects of implementing the Travel Management Rule, which is expected to occur by 2010. The Rule calls for implementing the decision in collaboration with national forest stakeholders and directs the Forest Service to designate routes (roads and trails) and areas open to motorized travel with some exceptions. Over-the-snow vehicles are the only motorized use that will be excluded from this rule.

In accordance with the Travel Management Rule, motorized travel would be prohibited outside of existing designated routes (roads and trails) and areas where it is not already restricted or prohibited by law, regulation, policy, order, Forest Plan direction, or site-specific decision. The Rule would not close any existing designated routes currently open for motorized use, although non-highway licensed vehicles are proposed to be prohibited from some roads based on safety concerns. The Rule requires National Forests to publish a "Motor Vehicle Use Map" that will show designated routes (roads and trails) and areas which are open to motorized travel, including the season of use and class of vehicle for each of the routes and areas. The Rule requires that all National Forests prohibit motorized travel off of designated routes or outside of designated areas, with some exceptions. For more information on this Rule, and how the Three Trails OHV project is linked, visit:

<http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/centraloregon/travel-mgmt/index.shtml>



***What is the need for this project?***

*There is a need to provide for a designated trail system where there is some community support on the Crescent Ranger District in a suitable and sustainable location while considering other forest uses.*

Currently, there are no designated OHV trails on the Crescent Ranger District. The Three Trails area is used extensively by off highway enthusiasts, as demonstrated by the many user-created trails. They also utilize other existing roads (closed and open) which may or may not be maintained for high clearance vehicles. Recognizing the effect to the OHV community once the Travel Management Rule is implemented, the Deschutes and Ochoco National Forests were proactive in identifying opportunities for a trail system in sustainable locations. Through a working group of motorized and non-motorized participants, three areas were identified that had potential community support for a designated trail system. The Three Trails OHV Project is one of them.

While considering a trail system, the project will be designed around a wide range of forest uses such as wildlife habitat, recreational experiences (hunting, fishing, bird-watching, hiking, horseback riding), utilities (powerlines, communication), extraction of forest products, highways and urban interface with homes. The interdisciplinary team worked diligently to provide trail systems in areas where community support would be the highest, avoiding areas (wherever possible) with Late Successional Reserves, designated old growth, key elk habitat, riparian resources, Oregon Cascades Recreation Area, Wild and Scenic River Corridors, and the Royce Butte Fire. Also, well distributed mule deer hiding cover would be provided to minimize harassment and allow migration across less fragmented trail areas (Rivers and Walker).

***What is the Proposed Action?***

Basically, the proposal would provide approximately 110-130 miles of interlinking trails in three main areas with associated staging areas. These main areas are described further in this document. The trail system would vary in skill level and density to match the terrain, design of the staging areas, and to provide an opportunity for beginner through advanced riding experiences. Where redundant access exists, or user-created trails are in undesired locations (such as within riparian resources or desired wildlife habitat), closure and rehabilitation/restoration would be performed on 50 miles. To balance the increase open road/trail density associated with a designated trail system, approximately 65 miles of roads would be closed. A general season of use would be May 1 through October 31.

Roads, user created trails, fire lines, snowmobile trails, and skid roads provide existing travel corridors that would be the basis for most trails. Routes used to connect between areas of higher density trails and communities such as the Crescent Lake area businesses would generally use roads currently open for high clearance vehicles (Maintenance Level II). Over time, the converted roads and trails would be modified to provide varying experiences and difficulty levels. Some trails would be narrowed to accommodate exclusive use for motorcycle-type vehicles. Where trail densities are high and varying in difficulty, one-way "loops" would be provided to improve safety. The trail system would be implemented in phases. Signing of existing "open" and "closed" routes and trails would occur immediately. Areas would then be

designed and constructed, as funding is available, to provide more diversity in difficulty and user experience.

The proposed action would provide trail systems for all three classes of OHVs. They are classified into three standard categories:

**Class I:** vehicles 50” wide or less and dry weight of 800 pounds or less, have a saddle or seat, and travel on three or four tires.

**Class II:** vehicles (such as jeeps) more than 50” wide or having a dry weight of more than 800 pounds, but less than 8,000 pounds.

**Class III:** vehicles (such as motorcycles) riding on two tires with a dry weight of less than 600 pounds.

The following is a detailed description of the Three Trails system:

### ***Junction***

Junction (*Map 2*) is the northern portion of the project area near the town of Crescent Lake Junction. This area focuses on Class I and III users and concentrates use around the staging area and the availability of services at Crescent Lake Junction. Junction Snow Park would become the staging area. The Junction area will provide approximately 20-25 miles of looped trails for ATVs and motorcycles within a 135-acre designated area. This area uses existing snowmobile trails to access Crescent Lake Junction. Existing user-created trails within the Junction designated area would be utilized, but may be modified with new trails, to provide varying degrees of difficulty and/or for safety. In addition the following roads would be closed to all motor vehicle traffic to offset the creation of the trail system: 4672-200, 4672-800, 4672-060, 5814-500, 5814-700, 5815-250, 5815-700, 5815-800, 5815-900 at the private road junction, 6020-500 at the 6020-750 junction, 6100-707, 6100-725, and 6100-740.

### ***Rivers***

The Rivers area (*Map 3*) is the middle portion of the project area that includes Muttonchop Butte near the Two Rivers North subdivision and south to the district boundary. This area also focuses on Class I and III users with four areas of developed trails with a total of 80-100 miles across approximately 3,400 acres. A Forest Plan Amendment is proposed to modify the Hemlock Key Elk Area and the Muttonchop Designated Old Growth Management Area boundaries to remove areas of high road/trail densities, a fire area, and/or poor quality habitat to include more appropriate areas. For example, a rock pit is currently located within a designated Old Growth boundary on Muttonchop Butte. The pit receives high use by the motorized community and provides marginal wildlife habitat. This proposal would move the designated Old Growth boundary to the north and include the pit in the trail system. As in other areas, excess user-created trails that are not in suitable locations would be rehabilitated. In order to provide for safety and to provide a connection between the east and west portions of the Rivers trail system, a railroad crossing and an underpass for Highway 97 is proposed.

The Rivers staging area (Area A) would be developed on the 5850-150 road. The 3-5 acre facility would include camping, parking, toilets and off-loading ramps. Short loops for children would be developed immediately adjacent to the facility and approximately 5-10 miles of existing user created trails and loops would be the basis for trail development adjacent to the Rivers staging area.

In our public meeting for this area, we heard from many users that we should focus motorized use away from the water, and we agree. There would be no OHV trails within the Riparian Reserve along Hemlock Creek and the Little Deschutes River, and those that exist would be rehabilitated. However, to provide access to users who would like to enjoy the river for other non-motorized uses such as fishing, and bird watching, designated parking areas would be developed. All other user-created OHV trails in the riparian area would be rehabilitated to walking trails. There would be no river or stream crossing constructed with this proposal and all such crossings would be on existing roads. Existing user-created crossings would be rehabilitated. Outside of the riparian areas, some user-created trails would be utilized for connections and loops. The 5852-150, 5852-100, and 5852-180 roads would remain open for high clearance vehicles and OHV use, while roads 5852-170, 5852-050, 5850-200, 5850-240 and 5850-280, would eventually be converted into a motorized trail system.

Area B is approximately 500 acres and located to the south and east of Two Rivers North subdivision to the railroad. This area would consist of approximately 8 miles of existing closed roads and 3 miles of existing user-created connecting trails. The designated routes and trails would not be altered or further developed and would provide a recreational experience that is different than the traditional trail system.

Area C is south of the staging area, between the railroad and Highway 58, on the 5850-200 road. Approximately 45-50 miles of Class I and III trails would be developed across this 2,754 acre area. Existing roads and user-created trails would be the basis for trail design in the area. These would be modified to provide variety and safety and would include single track and OHV trails. Roads that would remain for all vehicles that can negotiate high clearance roads include the 9751-100, 9751-200, 9751-210, and 9751-212. To provide linkage, those portions of the 9751-100 and 9751-200 roads that are currently classified as closed would be opened and converted to roads maintained for high clearance vehicles.

On approximately 410 acres around Muttonchop Butte (Area M), the proposal is to utilize user-created trails, with some newly developed trails and high clearance vehicle roads to provide approximately 25-30 miles of looped trails at varying levels of difficulty for OHV and motorcycle users. Existing trails may be altered or extended to provide difficulty, diversity, and safety. The Muttonchop rock pit on the southern base of the butte would continue to be utilized for intensive OHV use. Currently, road 5830 through the Two Rivers subdivision is for passenger automobiles only and the State of Oregon recognizes most OHV use as illegal. The Forest Service proposes to change this road to "mixed use" through a designation process that incorporates safety measures, such as signing.

Within the Rivers Area, to offset creation of additional trails and opening of roads to provide linkage, roads 5825-010, 5825-080 from the 5825-000 to 5825-200, 5825-180, 5830-600, 5830-830, 5830-870 from the 5830-870 to the end of the road and 9700-993 would be closed.

The Rivers area would also support the long routes known by some publics as the Oregon Backcountry Discovery Trail and the 10-Mile loop trail. It also provides access to the Mini-Buttes loop trails (Map 3).

### ***Walker***

Walker (*Map 4*) is the portion of the project area that is east of Highway 97 and includes Walker Rim. While roads maintained for high clearance vehicles would be available to all OHV classes, the southern area would have developed trails for the Class II user. Approximately 12 miles of closed roads would be converted to Class II trails. A seasonal closure would be in effect for the entire Walker Trail system for two weeks during the mule deer rifle season. However, those roads within the “green dot system” and have a green dot, which is designed to reduce big game harassment during hunting season, would remain open to all motor vehicles.

A staging area would be developed along the 9755-060 near junction with the 9755. Access to viewpoints on Walker Mt would be on Class II roads from the Marmot Pass Road to reduce conflicts on the 94 road, where street legal vehicles are required. Approximately 12 miles of high clearance and formerly closed roads south of Little Walker Mountain (between the 9755 and 9753) would be converted to Class II trails. To offset a potential decrease in availability to an existing wildlife guzzler, a new guzzler would be placed off the 9755-195 road. The following roads would be closed to alleviate road/trail densities associated with creation of the trail system: 9765-760, 9765-750, 9765-720, 9768-480, 9768-479, 9768-470, 9768-457, 9768-450, and 9768-390.

### ***What preliminary issues have been identified?***

The following is a list of concerns or issues related to the proposed action that the interdisciplinary team and public have identified. Other concerns and issues may be brought forward by the public during the comment period. Where issues cannot be resolved through project design or mitigation, they may be the basis for developing alternatives to the Proposed Action.

- *Metolius/Windigo Horse Trail: Where the Three Trails system overlaps the horse trail there may be incompatibility.*
- *Disturbance to big game: Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife preliminary analysis of recent telemetry data suggests extensive deer use to the east and south of the Two Rivers North community. Considerable motorized use is already occurring in the area. Designation of a trail system and concentrated use can potentially cause more disturbance in key areas.*
- *Disturbance to other wildlife: Noise from OHVs disturbs nesting migrant birds. As with big game, concentrated use potentially can change how avian species use the area.*
- *Retaining the riding experience for Two Rivers North Residents: Some residents are concerned that designation of a trail system would increase non-local use that could lead to a change in the riding experience.*

***What is the timeline?***

After this round of public comment, the interdisciplinary team will develop alternatives to the proposed action based on issues and concerns brought forward. An environmental impact statement will then be completed and made available to the public in the summer of 2009, and a final decision is scheduled by late fall of 2009.

***Here is your invitation to comment.***

Please feel free to come in and talk to us at the Crescent Ranger District. The Three Trails interdisciplinary planning team has already traveled to several communities and provided open forums in developing this proposal. Many ideas on staging areas, links, and specific trail locations were incorporated. Comments may be oral or written and would be most helpful if received by **March 1, 2009**. Please direct your comments to Holly Jewkes, District Ranger, Crescent Ranger District, P.O. Box 208, Crescent, OR 97733. Indicate the name of the project (Three Trails OHV) in your letter. For more information you may also contact Joan Kittrell, Project Team Leader, or Chris Mickle, Environmental Coordinator. Hand-delivered and oral comments may be delivered to the same address during normal business hours: 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. Oral comments may also be provided via telephone (541) 433-3200 to any of the above people during normal business hours.

Comments may also be submitted through [comments-pacificnorthwest-deschutes-crescent@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-pacificnorthwest-deschutes-crescent@fs.fed.us). Please put "Three Trails OHV Scoping" in the subject line of your email. You will have another opportunity for comment when alternatives have been developed and the Environmental Impact Statement is made available.

Thank you for your interest in this project and helping in the development of a sustainable trail system.

Sincerely,

*/s/Holly Jewkes*  
HOLLY JEWKES  
District Ranger

cc: Joan L Kittrell  
Enclosures