



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

February 2009



Design and Replacement of Old Job Bridge

Decision Memo

**USDA Forest Service, Eastern Region
Green Mountain National Forest
Manchester Ranger District
Town of Mt. Tabor
Rutland County, Vermont**

For Information Contact: Doug Reeves
Forestwide AT/LT and Wilderness Coordinator
Green Mountain National Forest
231 North Main Street
Rutland, VT 05701
(802) 747-6796
FAX (802) 747-6766
[E-mail: dreeves01@fs.fed.us](mailto:dreeves01@fs.fed.us)

Responsible Official: Alex Sienkiewicz
District Ranger, Manchester Ranger District
Green Mountain National Forest
2538 Depot Street
Manchester Center, VT 05255
(802) 362-2307, ext 212
FAX (802) 362-1251
[E-mail: asienkiewicz@fs.fed.us](mailto:asienkiewicz@fs.fed.us)

This document can be made available in large print.
Contact Doug Reeves (802) 747-6796

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, and marital or familial status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, 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, 1400 Independence Ave. SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call 202-720-5964 (voice or TDD).

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Design and Replacement of Old Job Bridge Project Decision Memo

USDA Forest Service, Eastern Region, Green Mountain National Forest
Manchester Ranger District
Town of Mt. Tabor, Rutland County, Vermont

I. SUMMARY

As District Ranger for the Manchester Ranger District of the Green Mountain National Forest (GMNF), I am authorizing the implementation of the relocation and replacement of the Old Job Bridge and the necessary hiking trail relocation of Old Job Forest Trail (FT) 412. The project is located on National Forest System (NFS) land in the Town of Mt. Tabor, Rutland County, VT on the Manchester Ranger District of the GMNF (see attached map, Figure 1).

II. DECISION TO BE IMPLEMENTED

A. Purpose and Need

The purpose and need for this project is to relocate and replace the Old Job Bridge, and to construct the necessary hiking trail relocation of Old Job FT 412. Old Job FT 412 is a popular Appalachian Trail/Long Trail (AT/LT) side trail that parallels Lake Brook and Big Branch Brook through the historic Old Job Town site. The project area includes the old bridge location, the new bridge location, and the relocation of FT 412.

A 2007 spring flood event severely damaged the 85 ft. suspension bridge by the Old Job Shelter on FT 412, and it was removed in 2008 by a Green Mountain Club (GMC) volunteer crew. A proposed new bridge site was located in 2008 approximately 250 feet upstream from the old bridge site (Figure 1). Several different bridge designs were evaluated by *Environmental Transportation Land Development Services: VHB Pioneer* for construction, and a glulam timber bridge was evaluated as being the most cost-effective alternative for this particular site (bridge design plans will be located in the project planning record).

This project is located in the White Rocks National Recreation Area (Management Area 8.3), which was renamed the Robert T. Stafford White Rocks National Recreation Area after completion of the 2006 GMNF Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan).

The Old Job Trail, FT 412, is an important side trail to the Appalachian National Scenic Trail, FT 1 (Figure 1). As directed by the Forest Plan, management of side trails to the Appalachian and Long Trails (AT and LT) should conform to the Long Trail System Management Plan (Forest Plan, pp. 70 and 76). Trail facilities located outside AT and LT Management Areas (MA 8.1, 8.2) on side and spur trails identified in the Long Trail System Management Plan are considered a component of the overall AT and LT systems (Forest Plan, p. 76). This decision to relocate and replace the Old Job Bridge is consistent with Forest Plan direction for the AT Management Area, MA 8.1 (Forest Plan, pp. 66-72). The visual guidance for this project, at this particular site, is semi-primitive non-motorized Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS).

In concurrence with AT/LT management practices and the Forest Plan for work on side trails to the AT/LT, there will be close coordination with the Green Mountain Club for this project (Forest Plan, p. 70). We will emphasize using their paid employees and volunteers to the highest practical degree for the construction of the new bridge.

B. Description of Decision

My decision is to implement the relocation and replacement of the Old Job Bridge, and the construction of the approximately 500 feet of trail relocation to connect the bridge to the existing trail, FT 412 (Figure 1). The previous Old Job Bridge that was constructed in the late 1950's had served the area well except for occasional damage from debris in the stream during high water events. The replacement bridge will be located on higher ground where the contract engineers have deemed that it would be less likely to incur the least storm damage.

Materials will be brought in and removed from the project area using a helicopter and/or via FR 322 (Figure 1) with All Terrain Vehicles (ATV) to the intersection of Big Branch and then hand-carried with trail crews from Big Branch to the project area. To minimize soil and water impacts to FR 322, transportation of material into and out of the project area using ATV will occur during dry season conditions. During implementation, drainage structures will be maintained to assure proper drainage. At the end of project implementation, location of permanent drainage structures, ie, water bars, will be identified, as needed, by soil/water staff.

Properly sized abutments will be constructed as designated by the contractor for the bridge design. The abutments will have an area of impact of approximately 20 feet in diameter on both sides of the stream (bridge design plans will be located in the project planning record). A helicopter will be used to bring in and place the wood or steel stringers for the Old Job Bridge construction. The replacement bridge will present no barriers to people with disabilities and it will comply with all relevant accessibility universal design standards.

The existing FT 412 Old Job Trail will be relocated to accommodate the new Old Job Bridge location. The trail will be constructed using hand tools and chainsaws for the clearing of the vegetation for a tread width of 12" to 18" according to the trail standard in the FS 2309.18 Trail Handbook and the Appalachian Trail Design, Construction and Maintenance guidelines. In addition to following these standards and guidelines, from the west side of the new bridge along the slope above Lake Brook, mulch disturbed soils as soon as trail construction is completed daily. Drainage structures along the trail relocation will be located to minimize trail soil erosion and prevent soil sedimentation from entering Lake Brook. Care will be taken locating and constructing the trail relocation to avoid impacts to historic remains from the Old Job Town site.

The trail relocation of FT 412 will be in the Protective Strip (Forest Plan, p. 20) of Lake Brook at the stream crossing of the new bridge location, then the trail relocation will climb away from the stream, out of the Protective Strip, to a gently sloping area, following an old woods road, then downslope to join the existing FT 412. Drainage structures along the trail relocation will be located to minimize trail erosion and prevent sedimentation from entering Lake Brook.

Contract design guidelines for the new bridge conform to all Forest Service engineering guidelines for strength and durability. Bridge materials will be visually suitable for a semi-primitive ROS. Non-reflective materials that blend with the natural coloration of the area will be required. Due to the expected overall length of approximately 66 feet, metal and other manmade materials are allowed as long as they blend with the surrounding environment.

This decision includes implementation of mitigation measures identified in Appendix A of this Decision Memo. This decision is based upon an environmental analysis conducted by GMNF Resource Specialists during Small Projects Day on 10/23/07, and responses to input from GMC and the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC). This information is located in the project planning record located at the GMNF Manchester Ranger District Office in Manchester Center, VT.

III. REASONS FOR CATEGORICALLY EXCLUDING THE DECISION

A. Category of Exclusion

Decisions may be categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement or an environmental assessment when they are within one of the categories found at 36 CFR 220.6(d) and (e), and there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the decision that may result in a significant individual or cumulative environmental effect.

Based upon the environmental analysis contained in the project planning record and on experience with similar activities on the GMNF, I have concluded that this decision can be appropriately categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement or environmental assessment. I have determined that the selected action is a routine activity within the following category of exclusion found at 36 CFR 220.6(e)(1): "Construction and reconstruction of trails".

B. Relationship to Extraordinary Circumstances

The list of seven extraordinary circumstances that were examined for this analysis may be found at 36 CFR 220.6(b). The mere presence of one or more of these resource conditions does not preclude use of a categorical exclusion. It is the degree of the potential effects of a proposed action on these resource conditions that determines whether extraordinary circumstances exist. I have concluded that there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the decision that may result in a significant individual or cumulative effect on the quality of the human environment. My conclusion is based on information presented in this document and the entirety of the record. A summary of the project's potential effects on each resource condition is as follows:

1. Federally Listed Threatened or Endangered Species or Designated Critical Habitat, Species Proposed for Federal Listing or Proposed Critical Habitat, or Forest Service Sensitive Species –

It was determined that this decision will have 'no effect' on federally listed animal or plant species or their critical habitats as a result from this project (Wildlife Biological Evaluation, 2/24/09; Plant Biological Evaluation, 7/20/08, both Biological Evaluations are located in the project planning record).

Forest Service Manual (FSM) 2670 direction requires analysis of potential impacts to sensitive species, those species for which the Regional Forester has identified population viability is a concern. These species are listed as Regional Forester's Sensitive Species (RFSS).

This project will have 'no effect' on any of the RFSS or their preferred habitats, and thus is not likely to lead to loss of viability or trend toward federal listing for any animal or plant on the RFSS list (Wildlife Biological Evaluation, 2/24/09; Plant Biological Evaluation, 6/20/08, both Biological Evaluations are located in the project planning record).

2. Floodplains, Wetlands, or Municipal Watersheds –

This project is located in the floodplain of Lake Brook, and near wetlands associated with Lake Brook and Big Branch (Figure 1). This has been validated by map and site-review. A

review by Forest engineers and the design contractors, VHB Pioneer, confirm that the new bridge location at a higher elevation above the stream will minimize impediments to Lake Brook during high water events. The project activity will not impair the function of the floodplain or wetlands. Similar past projects in this area were determined to have no significant floodplains or wetlands-related impacts. Field review (monitoring) of similar projects validates acceptable resource effects from similar activities. No significant impacts to the floodplain or wetlands are expected to result from this project. (Communication with VHB Pioneer Environmental Associates, 9/19/09; and Brian Austin, Civil Engineer; and Nancy Burt, Soil Scientist, 10/24/06 (located in the project planning record)).

This project is not located in or near municipal watersheds. This has been validated by map and site-review. No significant impacts to municipal watersheds are expected to result from this project. (Communication with Nancy Burt, Soil Scientist, 10/24/06 (located in the project planning record)).

A Stream Alteration Permit will be obtained for the activity within the floodplains from the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources Department of Environmental Conservation Water Quality Division.

3. Congressionally Designated Areas, such as Wilderness, Wilderness Study Areas, or National Recreation Areas –

Wilderness:

Wilderness is identified on the Forest as Management Area 5.1 (Forest Plan, p. 49). The use of a helicopter will have minor effects to the wilderness resources in the Big Branch and Peru Peak Wilderness Areas due to the bridge project location being within less than 1/8 mile to the Big Branch Wilderness boundary and 1 mile from the Peru Peak Wilderness boundary (Figure 1). The delivery of materials will not be located within the wilderness area itself. Wilderness is managed to provide visitors a primitive recreation opportunity with experiences of quiet and solitude. The use of a helicopter for this project will temporarily negatively impact those opportunities for a duration of no more than two hours during the summer season. The impacts are primarily related to the noise of the helicopter as it flies over and delivers materials immediately adjacent to the Big Branch Wilderness from the staging area at the Mt Tabor work center. These impacts will be a one time impact that will last no more than two hours for this project.

Cumulatively, the impacts from helicopter use could be up to six hours in a single year while other activities planned in the same vicinity are being implemented. Those other planned projects include the reconstruction of the Big Branch Bridge, located within the Big Branch Wilderness Area and fish stocking of Griffith Lake, located outside but immediately adjacent to the Peru Peak and Big Branch Wilderness Areas. The cumulative impacts could last up to six straight hours at one time while all work is being completed simultaneously, or it could be up to six hours spread throughout a single year. The cumulative impacts to wilderness associated with noise from the helicopter will be temporary and relatively short in duration compared to the complete season of high visitor use between June and October. There are no recommended actions to mitigate impacts to congressionally designated resources. (communication with Recreation Planner, 10/23/07 and 2/27/09 (located in the project planning record)).

Wilderness Study Areas:

There are no Wilderness Study Areas within the project area. This decision will not affect Wilderness Study Areas (communication with Recreation Planner, 10/23/07 (located in the project planning record)).

National Recreation Areas:

This decision includes activity within the *Robert T. Stafford White Rocks* National Recreation Area (RTSWR NRA) (Figure 1). The activity within this area is consistent with direction for management of the National Recreation Area. The Forest Plan directs that this area should be managed for recreational opportunities for primitive and semi-primitive motorized (winter) and non-motorized (year-round) recreation (Forest Plan, pp. 79-81). Hiking trails with necessary bridges are compatible with primitive and semi-primitive motorized and non-motorized recreation areas. The use of the helicopter inside the RTSWR NRA will have no effect to those values in which it is managed according to the 2006 Forest Plan Desired Future Condition (DFC) and Standards & Guidelines. This decision will not result in significant impacts on the National Recreation Area. There are no recommended actions to mitigate impacts to congressionally designated resources (communication with Recreation Planner, 10/23/07 and 2/27/09 (located in the project planning record)).

Wild and Scenic Rivers:

Although the GMNF does not contain any Congressionally designated Wild and Scenic Rivers, there are many river segments that are eligible to be further considered for addition to the National Wild and Scenic River System. These river segments and their associated corridors are within the Eligible Wild, Scenic, and Recreational Rivers Management Area (MA 9.4). This decision includes activity within the eligible Big Branch Scenic River corridor (Figure 1). The activity within this area is consistent with direction for management of the Scenic River (Forest Plan, pp. 105-109). This decision will not adversely affect the outstandingly remarkable value identified for this river, which is Heritage, and thus will not preclude it from future consideration for addition to the National Wild and Scenic River System (communication with Recreation Planner, 10/23/07 (located in the project planning record)).

4. Inventoried Roadless Areas or Potential Wilderness Areas –

This project is within the 2006 Forest Plan Old Job Inventoried Roadless Area (IRA) (Figure 1). The project activities will not involve road construction or the cutting or removal of timber for commercial purposes, therefore, the project activities will not have any impact on inventoried roadless area values. Similar past projects in this area were determined to have no significant impacts on inventoried roadless areas. This decision will not result in significant impacts on inventoried roadless areas nor will it preclude this area from future roadless inventories or congressional designation as wilderness (communication with Recreation Planner, 10/23/07 (located in the project planning record)).

5. Existing and Candidate Research Natural Areas –

There are no Research Natural Areas in the project area. The closest Research Natural Area, the French Hollow Research Natural Area, is 10 miles south of the project. Several Ecological Special Areas that are not included in the Ecological Special Area MA (MA 8.7), but mentioned in the 2006 Forest Plan (p. 79) are located in the Robert T. Stafford White

Rocks NRA. The closest of these areas are the Big and Little Mud Ponds that are approximately 2 miles to the south. This decision, with impacts limited to the immediate area of activity, will not affect designated Research Natural Areas or these Ecological Special Areas (communication with staff ecologist, 10/23/07).

6. American Indian and Alaska Native Religious or Cultural Sites –

See Item 7 below.

7. Archaeological Sites, or Historic Properties or Areas –

This decision complies with the National Historic Preservation Act, the Archaeological Resources Protection Act, and the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act. Surveys were conducted for Native American religious or cultural sites, archaeological sites, and historic properties or areas that may be affected by this decision. A 'no properties affected' determination was made. Consultation on this finding occurred with the State Historic Preservation Office (concurrence from Forest Archaeologist, 7/15/08 (located in the project planning record)).

8. Other Resources –

In addition to resource conditions that could lead to extraordinary circumstances, I also have considered the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to other resources such as soil/water, fisheries, visuals, recreation, and non-native invasive species. This project will not result in significant impacts to these resources, particularly because all applicable Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines will be implemented (communication with Resource Specialists at Small Projects Day, 10/23/07).

IV. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

This project was listed in the quarterly *Green Mountain National Forest Schedule of Proposed Actions* (SOPA) beginning in October 2008, 1st quarter of Fiscal Year (FY) 09 and will remain in the SOPA until the project is authorized for implementation.

Public involvement included input from the Green Mountain Club (GMC) regarding design and replacement of the Old Job Bridge, and the necessary trail relocation of FT 412.

This project was also internally scoped with Forest Service staff during Small Projects Day on 10/23/07. Internal issues were identified and addressed concerning watershed and cultural resources with mitigation measures for Heritage and Soil and Water Resources (Appendix A).

V. FINDINGS REQUIRED BY AND/OR RELATED TO OTHER LAWS AND REGULATIONS

My decision will comply with all applicable laws and regulations. I have summarized some pertinent ones below.

National Environmental Policy Act - This Act requires public involvement and consideration of potential environmental effects. The entirety of documentation for this decision supports compliance with this Act.

Forest Plan Consistency (National Forest Management Act) –The National Forest Management Act (NFMA) requires the development of long-range land and resource management plans, and

that all site-specific project activities be consistent with direction in the plans. The GMNF Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) was completed and approved in 2006 as required by NFMA. The Forest Plan provides direction for all management activities on the GMNF. The Old Job Bridge Design and Replacement Project implements the Forest Plan.

The project area is within the Robert T. Stafford White Rocks National Recreation Area, Management Area (MA) 8.3 (Figure 1) as described in the 2006 Forest Plan. As required by NFMA Section 1604(i), I find this project to be consistent with the Forest Plan including goals, objectives, desired future conditions, and Forest-wide and Management Area Standards and Guidelines.

The Forest Plan directs that the Robert T. Stafford White Rocks National Recreation Area should be managed for recreational opportunities for primitive and semi-primitive motorized (winter) and non-motorized (year-round) recreation (Forest Plan, pp. 79-81). Hiking trails with necessary bridges are compatible with primitive and semi-primitive motorized and non-motorized recreation areas.

Endangered Species Act - The Endangered Species Act requires that federal activities do not jeopardize the continued existence of any species federally listed or proposed as threatened or endangered, or result in adverse modification to such species' designated critical habitat. In accordance with Section 7(c) of this Act, a report of the listed and proposed, threatened, or endangered species that may be present in the project area was reviewed. See Section III, Item B.1 of this document.

Clean Water Act – The intent of the Act is to restore and maintain the integrity of waters. The Forest Service complies with this Act through Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines, specific project design criteria, and/or mitigation measures to ensure protection of soil and water resources.

Wetlands (Executive Order 11990) - Executive Order 11990 directs the agency to avoid to the extent possible the adverse impacts associated with the destruction or modification of wetlands, and to avoid support of new construction in wetlands wherever there is a practical alternative. See Section III, Item B2 of this document.

Floodplains (Executive Order 11988) - Executive Order 11988 directs the agency to avoid to the extent possible the adverse impacts associated with the occupancy and modification of floodplains, and to avoid support of floodplain development wherever there is a practical alternative. See Section III, Item B2 of this document.

National Historic Preservation Act - Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act requires federal agencies to take into account the effect of a project on any district, site, building, structure, or object that is included in, or eligible for inclusion in the National Register. It also requires federal agencies to afford the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation a reasonable opportunity to comment. See Section III, Item B.7 of this document.

Archaeological Resources Protection Act - The Archaeological Resources Protection Act covers the discovery and protection of historic properties (prehistoric and historic) that are excavated or discovered in federal lands. It affords lawful protection of archaeological resources and sites that are on public and Indian lands. See Section III, Item B.7 of this document.

Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act - The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act covers the discovery and protection of Native American human

remains and objects that are excavated or discovered in federal lands. It encourages avoidance of archaeological sites that contain burials or portions of sites that contain graves through "in situ" preservation, but may encompass other actions to preserve these remains and items. See Section III, Item B.6 of this document.

Wild and Scenic Rivers Act - See Section III, Item B.3 of this document.

Federal Noxious Weed Act of 1974 and Executive Order 11312 (Non-Native Invasive Species) – The Federal Noxious Weed Act requires cooperation with State, local, and other federal agencies in the management and control of non-native invasive species (NNIS); Executive Order (EO) 11312 requires all pertinent federal agencies (subject to budgetary appropriations) to prevent the introduction of NNIS. This project's decision meets the intent of this law and EO by incorporating all pertinent Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines to ensure the management and control of NNIS.

Environmental Justice (Executive Order 12898) - This order requires consideration of whether projects would disproportionately impact minority or low-income populations. This decision complies with this order. Public involvement occurred for this project, the results of which I have considered in this decision-making. Public involvement did not identify any adversely impacted local minority or low-income populations. This decision is not expected to adversely impact minority or low-income populations.

VI. ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW OR APPEAL OPPORTUNITIES

This decision is not subject to an administrative review or appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 215 and the Earth Island Institute v. Ruthenbeck Ruling of October 19, 2005.

VII. IMPLEMENTATION DATE

This decision may be implemented immediately.
Implementation will be dependent on available funding.

VIII. CONTACT PERSON

Further information about this decision can be obtained from Doug Reeves during normal office hours (weekdays, 9:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.) at the GMNF Supervisor's office, 231 North Main Street, Rutland, VT 05701; Phone: (802) 747-6796; Fax: (802) 747-6766; or e-mail: dreeves01@fs.fed.us.

Additional information about this decision can be found on the Internet at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/forests/greenmountain/index.htm>

IX. SIGNATURE AND DATE

/s/ Alex Sienkiewicz

Date: 6 March, 2009

ALEX SIENKIEWICZ
District Ranger
Responsible Official

Attachment(s): Mitigation Measures, Appendix A; Map of project area, Figure 1.