



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Huron-Manistee National Forests
Huron Shores Ranger Station
5761 N. Skeel Avenue
Oscoda, MI 48750

989-739-0728 (Voice)
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File Code: 1950

Date: January 30, 2008

Dear Interested Publics:

The Huron Shores Ranger Station is requesting your comments on the Proposed Decision for the Alcona County ORV Trail on the Harrisville Ranger District of the Huron-Manistee National Forests. I have enclosed a copy of the Proposed Decision Memo for your review. To ensure that I have the opportunity to consider your comments before I make a final decision on this project, they must be timely. This letter provides details on how you may comment.

Affected Area

The Alcona County ORV Trail Project is a linear trail designation that begins in Millen Township, Alcona County, Michigan and ends in Mentor Township, Oscoda County, Michigan. The proposed trail route passes through the Huron National Forest in T26N R7E, Sections 8, 17 - 19, 30; T26N R6E, Sections 25, 31 - 36; T26N R5E, Sections 27, 28, 31 - 36; T25N R5E, Sections 1 - 3, 12; T26N R4E, Sections 25 - 27, 33 - 36. The proposed route would connect the Barton City area to the existing ATV trail system in Oscoda County south of McKinley. A small trailhead would be built adjacent to Walker Road just south of Barton City. A map of the proposed project is enclosed.

Purpose and Need for the Proposed Actions

The Huron National Forest setting within Alcona County is generally well roaded. The road system is open only to motor vehicles that are licensed for street legal use by the Secretary of State. There are no designated motorized trails other than the wintertime snowmobile trail system. The proposed project is located in Management Areas 2.1 and 4.2 of the Huron-Manistee National Forests Land and Resource Management Plan (Forests' Plan). According to the Forest Plan the desired future condition in these Management Areas is to "provide roads and trails appropriate for motorized and non-motorized uses" in a roaded natural recreational setting.

This project would provide trail opportunities for ATVs and trail bikes less than 50" in width. The trail would be located primarily on existing snowmobile trail and roads in order to provide motorized riding opportunity in Alcona County from Barton City to the existing system of ATV/motorcycle trails maintained in Oscoda County.

The Alcona County Parks and Recreation Commission manages the designated snowmobile trails in Alcona County. The Alcona County Board of Commissioners and the Parks and Recreation Commission have long recognized the desire of the recreating public for opportunities for riding of ATVs and trail bikes in their county. Both the county commissioners and park and recreation commissions have proposed the use of this route and desire to have the



trail recognized by the Michigan DNR as part of ATV trail opportunities available in Michigan. As a recognized public trail the Forest Service, Alcona County and the Michigan DNR would form partnerships to construct and maintain this trail system by funding from Michigan DNR ATV Trail Grant dollars. The Alcona County Parks and Recreation Commission proposes to seek this funding to provide dollars annually to sign, brush, repair, police and groom public ATV trails.

Proposed Action

The proposed action is to designate approximately 21.25 miles of existing snowmobile trail, 4.25 miles of open Forest Service System Road, 1 mile of closed Forest Service System Road, and 2.25 miles of new trail construction for ATV trail use. The trail designation would become part of the Forest Service system of trails and the state-wide designated trail system. The trail would be operated and maintained by Alcona County Parks and Recreation Commission through Michigan DNR ORV Trails grant program and Forest Service Challenge Cost Share Agreement. The 4.25 miles of the route that are currently open to public travel by State of Michigan licensed vehicles will be signed to warn users of dual use. All other portions of the designated route will be limited to motor vehicle less than 50" in width and those that have obtained a current State of Michigan Off Road Vehicle Trail Permit Sticker.

Laws and Regulations

A proposed action may be categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement or environmental assessment when it is within one of the categories identified by the U.S. Department of Agriculture in 7 CFR part 1b or one of the categories identified by the Chief of the Forest Service in Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 1909.15 sections 31.1b or 31.2 Categories of Actions for Which a Project or Case File and Decision Memo Are Required, and there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action that may result in a significant individual or cumulative effect on the quality of the human environment.

This proposal is in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and CEQ regulations contained in Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 1909.15, Chapter 30, Section 31.2, Category 1; construction and reconstruction of trails. There are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action. The project location has been identified and developed to avoid wetlands, floodplains, Congressionally designated areas, Research Natural Areas, threatened or endangered species, designated critical habitat, religious or cultural sites. This has been verified and documented by a review by resource specialists. This project is similar to previous trail projects on the Huron-Manistee National Forests utilizing primarily existing corridors where no adverse direct, indirect, or cumulative effects are known to have occurred.

Comments on the Proposal and Timeframe

The Forest is conducting a 30-day public scoping outreach which includes and is concurrent with a 30-day comment period to establish standing under a Forest Service administrative appeal regulation. The 30-day comment period provides the final pre-decisional opportunity for public review of the proposed action. The opportunity to comment ends 30 days following the date of publication of the legal notice in the Oscoda Press. Appeals may be filed by persons or non-Federal organizations or entities that provide comments or otherwise express interest in the



proposed action. In order to have standing to appeal this decision under 36 CFR 215, you must have submitted comments prior to the close of the 30-day comment period for the legal notice, and sign the comments or be able to verify identity upon request. Comments should be within the scope of the proposed action, specific to the proposed action, have a direct relationship to the proposed action, and include supporting reasons for the Responsible Official to consider. Your comments will be considered by District Ranger, Charles J. Andrina in reaching a final decision.

Please submit your written or hand-delivered comments to District Ranger, USDA Forest Service, Huron Shores Ranger Station, 5761 N. Skeel Ave., Oscoda, MI 48750, between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, or faxed to (989) 739-0347, or emailed to comments-eastern-huron-manistee-huron-shores@fs.fed.us (must be readable by Microsoft Office 2000 or Adobe Acrobat formats). Please include the following:

- 1) name, address, telephone number, organization represented and title;
- 2) title of the document on which the comments are being submitted (Alcona County ORV Trail Project);
- 3) specific facts and supporting reasons regarding your comments.

Comments received in response to the project will become a matter of public record¹. If you have questions or need additional information regarding the project, please contact Gordon Haase at (989) 739-0728, extension 3021, ghaase@fs.fed.us, or write to USDA Forest Service, Huron Shores Ranger Station, 5761 N. Skeel Ave., Oscoda, MI 48750. Copies of the final decision will be mailed to people who have submitted comments on this proposal and to anyone who requests a copy of these documents.

Sincerely,

/s/ *Charles J. Andrina*

CHARLES J. ANDRINA
District Ranger

Enclosures

¹ Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record and will be available for public inspection. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered; however, those who submit such comments will not have standing to appeal the subsequent decision under 36 CFR 215. Additionally, pursuant to 7 CFR 1.27 (d), any person may request that a submission be withheld from the public record by showing how the Freedom of Information Act permits such confidentiality. Persons requesting such confidentiality should be aware that confidentiality is granted in only very limited circumstances. The Forest Service will inform the requester of its decision regarding a request for confidentiality, and where the request is denied, the submission will be returned and the requester notified that the comments may be resubmitted with or without name and address.

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