

**Decision Notice  
And  
Finding of No Significant Impacts**

**Buford / New Castle Motorized Trail**

**Rifle Ranger District  
White River National Forest  
Garfield County, Colorado**

**Decision**

This notice documents my decision for the Buford / New Castle Motorized Trail construction proposal on the Rifle Ranger District of the White River National Forest. An environmental analysis of the proposal was undertaken in response to numerous comments received by members of the community for this trail throughout the travel management planning process. The trail is approximately 8 miles long and connects an existing trailhead to open motorized routes on National Forest System (NFS) lands north of New Castle, Colorado. This trail will be open to both all-terrain vehicles (ATV) and utility vehicles (UTV), commonly referred to as side-by-sides.

After considering information provided in the environmental analysis (EA), design criteria, public comments, consultation with other agencies, review of the White River National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, and internal Forest Service specialist input, I have decided to select the proposed action, which allows new trail construction of a unlicensed motorized route connecting the West Elk Trailhead to Triangle Park, where unlicensed vehicles can travel on existing, open motorized routes as described in this notice. Along with the new trail construction and trailhead improvements, this decision also allows licensed and unlicensed vehicles to access dispersed campsites on NFSR 245.4A, NFSR 245. 4B, NFSR 245. 4C and NFSR 245.5 D. The following design criteria will be followed:

**Design Criteria**

**Recreation**

1. Design trail as a class 4, all-terrain vehicle route and use recommendations identified in the Trails Management Handbook (FSH 2300.18) for trail tread clearing widths (72"- 96"), clearing height (8' – 10' high) and target grades (3%-10% with a maximum grade of 15" for 10% - 20% of the trail).
2. Construct sediment and erosion controls (water bars, rolling grade dips, site hardening, etc) along the entire trail to prevent runoff and erosion. Inspect, maintain and repair as needed throughout the existence of the trail.
3. Construct climbing turns rather than switchbacks

4. Limit visual impacts by trail design from visitors driving along NFSR 245. Construct the trail in dense forest away from the road when possible. Limit constructed features to regulatory and interpretive signs.
5. Enhance viewing opportunities along the trail.
6. Follow these and additional guidelines provided in the Forest Service Trails Management Handbook.
7. Install White River National Forest standard kiosk design and use approved color schematics and panel outline in accordance to the facility master plan.
8. Use boulders and natural materials to define the trailhead parking boundary.
9. No hazardous materials of any kind will be stored on NFS lands. Fuel for equipment will be transported to the site in the bed of a pickup truck.

### **Transportation**

1. Install, inspect and maintain reflective signs meeting Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) requirements on NFSR 245 informing passenger vehicles of up-coming ATV/UTV trail crossing.
2. Install, inspect and maintain reflective stop signs meeting MUTCD requirements at ATV/UTV road crossings of NFSR 245.
3. Design turnouts along the trail with good site distance to safely allow for ATV/UTV passage.
4. Clear roadside vegetation along NFSR 245 to provide appropriate site distances per AASHTO Guidelines for Geometric Design of Very Low-Volume Local Roads (ADT  $\leq$  400)
5. Provide maps with the new travel management information at the trailhead.
6. Enforce travel management rules and regulation on NFSR 245.

### **Cultural Resources**

1. All employees, contractors, subcontractors or other parties associated with the project will be instructed that, upon discovering evidence of possible prehistoric, historic or archaeological objects, work will cease immediately at that location. The FS will be notified immediately of the location and nature of the findings. Care will be exercised so as not to disturb or damage artifacts or fossils uncovered during excavation operations.
2. Equipment operators will be informed that the removal, injury, defacement or alteration of any object of archaeological or historic interest is a federal crime and may be punishable by fine and/or imprisonment.
3. During project implementation, in the unlikely event of an inadvertent encounter of Native American remains or grave objects, the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) requires that all activities must cease in their discovery area, that a reasonable effort be made to protect the items found or unearthed, and that immediate notification be made to the agency Authorized Officers as well as the appropriate Native American group(s) (IV C.2). Notice of such a discovery may be followed by a 30-day delay (NAGPRA Section 3(d)). Further

actions may also require compliance under provisions of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA) and the Archaeological Resources Protection Act.

Additional cultural resource inventories shall be conducted for alterations to the proposed route prior to implementation of the alterations. Consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and tribes will be conducted in accordance to the legal requirements of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1979, as amended.

### **Rangeland Management**

1. The FS will control weeds in accordance with the WRNF Invasive Plant Species Management EA (FS 2007).
2. To prevent the introduction of non-native, invasive plant species, construction equipment shall be thoroughly cleaned, inspected, and approved by the Forest Service prior to use of the equipment on National Forest lands or prior to roading equipment across National Forest Lands.
3. Treatments will be developed using integrated weed management principles for each species and situation. Treatments may include hand pulling and herbicide application.
4. Monitoring of noxious weeds will be conducted throughout the trails existence to detect new infestations, evaluate prevention and/or treatment success, and identify the need for re-treatment.
5. ATV/UTV catterguards will be installed at allotment boundaries and along fence lines used to manage cattle and sheep on NFS lands.
6. Education and awareness of invasive weeds and safe passage in cattle and sheep areas will be displayed at the trailhead, shared with the White River Trail Runners club and provided at volunteer events.

### **Timber**

1. Trees removed within the trail corridor will either be cut flush with the ground, or the entire root wad will be removed and filled with native material.
2. Trees removed outside of the disturbance limits will be identified by a timber specialist as presenting potential hazards to visitors, facilities and equipment and removed.
3. Construction slash will be scattered, stacked and made available for dispersed campers to use for as firewood.

### **Rationale**

The new trail construction in this proposal meets the purpose and needs of the project. As determined throughout the travel management planning process, this access route between the West Elk Trailhead and Triangle Park will meet the publics request for providing a high quality motorized recreation experiences. This project will ultimately be valued for providing a parking facility, outhouse and information but the trail also

provides access to hundreds of miles of other open, unlicensed routes. The trail layout through design, incorporates beautiful vistas, forested lands, and borders high mountain meadows suitable for both beginner and intermediate riders. The majority of the trail is located on existing timber roads and haul routes therefore limiting additional impacts. This project helps fulfill the need of the motorized community without having to develop entirely new disturbances on National Forest Lands. Furthermore, the project demonstrates our willingness to partner with the motorized community to assist in construction, maintenance and enforcement of our travel management plan and motorized recreation opportunities. This project aligns with the White River National Forest Vision:

*(We are) a 21<sup>st</sup> century organization, leading the nation in innovative landscape conservation, connecting citizens to the land through world class recreation, restoring and enhancing resilient ecosystem and contributing to sustainable economics. We tell our story and take care of each other as we continue our legacy of meeting incredible challenges with passion, creativity and collaboration.*

## **Alternatives Considered**

Two alternatives were considered in detail: No Action and the Proposed Action. Under the No Action no ATV/UTV trail would be constructed. Unlicensed motorized users would have to trailer their ATV/UTVs to Triangle Park where they will have to find a level location off the road to unload their ATV/UTVs and park. Current management plans would continue to guide the management of the area. The No Action alternative was used as a baseline to compare the effects of the Proposed Action. A summary comparison of the two alternatives can be found in the EA on pages 9 and 10.

## **Public Involvement**

The Notice of Proposed Action was sent to 30 individuals, organizations and other agencies for scoping on January 11, 2012. Consultation with affected tribes was also initiated at this time. Additionally, public notices and news releases were published in the Citizen Telegram and Glenwood Springs Post Independent between January and February, 2012. Several phone calls, emails, and letters were received in response to this public notice. Based on input, I determined that wildlife and recreation were key issues to be analyzed in the EA.

The EA was prepared in the spring 2012 and has been published in connection with this decision.

## **Finding of No Significant Impact**

After considering the context and intensity of environmental impacts described in the EA, I have determined that the proposed action will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement will not be

prepared. My determination is based on the following criteria outlined in the implementing regulations for the National Environmental Policy Act (40 CFR 1508.27). Thus, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared.

As indicated in the Executive Summary of the Environmental Analysis for the Buford / New Castle Motorized Trail, the proposed action would directly improve the safety of ATV/UTV users by providing an alternate designated trail that provides access to hundreds of miles of open travel routes and popular dispersed campsites. The proposed action would not increase ATV/UTV use in the area, but provide a safe and more enjoyable experience for the current unlicensed motorized visitor (See EA page ii).

### **Intensity**

1. My finding of no significant environmental effects is not biased by the beneficial effects of the action.
2. There will be no significant effects on public health and safety, following design criteria provided under the transportation section (see EA page 7).
3. There will be no significant effects on unique characteristics of the area, because there are no known sites identified (see EA pages 17-19).
4. The effects on the quality of the human environment are not likely to be highly controversial because there is no known scientific controversy over the impacts of the project according to the comments received during the 30-day period (see EA pages 3).
5. We have considerable experience with the types of activities to be implemented. The effects analysis shows the effects are not uncertain, and do not involve unique or unknown risk.
6. The action is not likely to establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects, because cumulative effects are minimal (see EA pages 11-23, Chapter 3).
7. Past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions have been considered and analyzed in conjunction with the proposed action and there were no cumulative effects determined to be significant (see EA pages 11-23, Chapter 3).
8. The action will have no significant adverse effect on districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (see EA pages 18).
9. The action will not adversely affect any endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species act of 1973 (see EA pages 12-14).

10. The EA was prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the action will not violate Federal, State, and local laws or requirements for the protection of the environment. Applicable laws and regulations were considered (see below ).

### **Findings Required by Other Laws**

*National Forest Management Act (NFMA) of 1976, as amended:* This project, and associated design criteria, complies with White River National Forest Plan standards and guidelines and management area direction applicable to the project area.

### **Administrative Review or Appeal Opportunities**

Only supportive comments were received during the 30-day comment period Therefore pursuant to 36 CFR 215.12 this decision is not subject to appeal.

### **Implementation**

This project can be implemented on or after this decision is signed. Implementation is anticipated to begin in the summer of 2012.

### **Contact Person**

For additional information concerning this decision contact Kyle Grambley, Recreation Specialist, (970) 625-6852 or [kgrambley@fs.fed.us](mailto:kgrambley@fs.fed.us).

  
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Glenn R. Adams  
District Ranger

6/13/12  
Date