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**DECISION NOTICE & FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT  
WHITNEY PORTAL WALK-IN CAMPGROUND EXPANSION  
U.S. FOREST SERVICE  
WHITNEY PORTAL, INYO NATIONAL FOREST  
MT. WHITNEY RANGER DISTRICT  
INYO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA**

**DECISION AND RATIONALE**

Based upon my review of the Whitney Portal Walk-in Campground Expansion Environmental Assessment (EA), I have decided to implement Alternative 2, the proposed action, which consists of building up to 13 tent pads and reestablishing a trail to access the tent pads east of the overflow parking lot at Whitney Portal. Bear boxes and picnic tables will also be installed.

Alternative 2 best meets the purpose and need to provide additional camping opportunities at Whitney Portal. The current walk-in campground, the lower family campground and group camping sites are often overbooked during the high-use summer months and hikers often camp in undesignated areas along Lone Pine Creek and elsewhere. Expanding the existing walk-in campground would provide additional camping opportunities, particularly for permitted hikers who need short-term (overnight), basic accommodations. The expansion of the walk-in campground could potentially alleviate camping pressure in undesignated areas and make campsites in the other campgrounds available for families or groups who are mainly there to enjoy the Whitney Portal recreational area.

Alternative 1, no action, was considered but not selected because it does not meet the purpose and need and would not alleviate camping pressure in undesignated areas or other campgrounds at Whitney Portal.

The Whitney Portal Walk-in Campground Expansion EA documents the environmental analysis and conclusions upon which this decision is based. The EA is available for public review at the Mount Whitney Ranger District Office located at 640 S. Main St., Lone Pine, CA 93545. The EA is also available at <http://www.fs.fed.us/nepa/fs-usda-pop.php/fs-usda-pop.php?project=38111>.

**PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

This action was originally listed as a proposal on the Inyo National Forest Schedule of proposed actions and updated periodically during the analysis. People were invited to review and comment on the proposal through mailings, emails and a legal notice published in the Inyo Register on February 2, 2012. The EA lists agencies and people consulted on page 8. A list of comments received and the responses can be found in Appendix A in the EA and project file.

## FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

The significance of potential environmental impacts was considered in terms of context and intensity. This project was evaluated for potential effects to the Whitney Portal area, Lone Pine Creek Watershed, and multiple user groups who visit Whitney Portal. The intensity of effects was considered in terms of the following:

### 1. Beneficial and adverse effects

The Proposed Action will utilize specific design criteria and Best Management Practices to avoid any negative effects to the watershed. Also, construction equipment will be cleaned to prevent the spread of noxious weeds, and weed information will be posted to deter spreading of weeds into the campground. No impacts to sensitive plants, wildlife or cultural resources are expected. Camping pressure in other campgrounds and camping in undesignated areas should be alleviated. All potential effects were summarized in the EA (p. 4-5) from supporting analyses (Lutrick 2012, Murphy and Sims 2012a, Murphy and Sims 2012b, Weis 2012a, Weis 2012b, Nicholas 2012, and Crane 2012). All analyses prepared in support of this document considered for both beneficial and adverse effects of the proposed action; however, beneficial effects were not used to offset or compensate for adverse effects in the analyses. None of the potential effects of the Proposed Action or No Action Alternative would be significant.

### 2. The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety

Based on the current analysis and other existing campground facilities on the Inyo National Forest, the proposed action is not likely to affect public health or safety.

### 3. Unique characteristics of the geographic area

The project area is not in the proximity of any parklands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild or scenic rivers, and historic or cultural resources. The project area is entirely within the Lone Pine Creek Riparian Conservation Area, but the small scale of the project and prescribed best management practices will likely prevent any negative effect to soil or water quality.

### 4. The degree to which the effects on the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.

The nature of potential effects on the human environment from the proposed action is well established and not likely to be highly controversial. There is no known scientific controversy over the impacts of the decision.

5. The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risk

The proposed action is similar in type and scope to many projects completed on the Inyo National Forest. The Mount Whitney Ranger District has developed and maintained several campground facilities in the Eastern Sierras, including the existing walk-in campground which is adjacent to the proposed expansion. Proposed construction and use activities are routine in nature and their effects are generally well known.

6. The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration

The proposed action is a site-specific project that does not set precedence for future actions with significant effects, and it does not represent a decision in principle about a future consideration. Any other proposals in the project area or at Whitney Portal would require a separate analysis.

7. Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts

The proposed action is limited in scope and will not contribute to cumulatively significant adverse impacts when considered in combination with past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future activities. A cumulative effects analysis was completed for each resource area and is summarized in the EA (p. 6-7). None of the resource specialists found potential for any cumulative effects (Lutrick 2012, Murphy and Sims 2012a, Murphy and Sims 2012b, Weis 2012a, Weis 2012b, Nicholas 2012)

8. The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources

A cultural resources review was conducted for this project and there are no scientific, cultural or historical resources within the project area (Nicholas 2012).

9. The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973

Biological Evaluations/Assessments were prepared for plants and wildlife. No threatened or endangered plant or wildlife species are known to occur within the project area. Several sensitive and one candidate wildlife species have potential habitat within the project area, but it was determined that this project would have no effect on these species or their habitats (Murphy 2012a).

10. Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law, or other requirements imposed for the protection of the environment

The proposed action was developed in accordance with and, therefore, does not threaten to violate any Federal, State or local laws or requirements for the protection of the environment (i.e.: Endangered Species Act, National Historic Preservation Act, Clean Water Act, and the Natural Forest Management Act). The above discussion of effects and the related references in the project file document that this project will not adversely affect soils, water quality, special status species, or cultural resources. The proposed action is also consistent with the Inyo National Forest Land and Resources Management Plan (1988) as amended by the Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment (2004).

### **ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW (APPEAL) OPPORTUNITIES**

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to regulations at 36 CFR 215. Individuals or organizations who provided comment or otherwise expressed interest in the proposed action during the comment period may appeal. Interest expressed or comments provided on this project prior to or after the close of the comment period do not have standing for appeal purposes.

The appeal must be filed (regular mail, fax, email, hand-delivery, express delivery, or messenger service) with the appropriate Appeal Deciding Officer. Submit appeals to: Appeal Deciding Officer, Ed Armenta, Forest Supervisor, 351 Pacu Lane, Suite 200, Bishop, CA 93514; fax (760)-873-2458. If hand delivered, the appeal must be received at the above address during business hours (Monday - Friday 8:00 am to 4:30 pm), excluding holidays. Electronic appeals may be submitted to: [appeals-pacificsouthwest-inyo@fs.fed.us](mailto:appeals-pacificsouthwest-inyo@fs.fed.us) with .doc, .rtf, .pdf, or .txt formats only. The appeal must have an identifiable name attached or verification of identity will be required. Names and addresses of appellants will become part of the public record. A scanned signature may serve as verification on electronic appeals.

Appeals, including attachments, must be in writing, fully consistent with 36 CFR 215.14, and filed (postmarked) within 45 days following the date this notice is published in the Inyo Register. This publication date is the exclusive means for calculating the time to file an appeal. Those wishing to appeal this decision should not rely upon dates or timeframes provided by any other source.

If no appeals are filed within the 45-day time period, implementation of the decision may occur on, but not before, 5 business days from the close of the appeal filing period. When appeals are filed, implementation may occur on, but not before, the 15th business day following the date of the last appeal disposition.

## IMPLEMENTATION DATE

If no appeals are filed within the 45-day time period, implementation of the decision may occur on, but not before, 5 business days from the close of the appeal filing period. When appeals are filed, implementation may occur on, but not before, the 15th business day following the date of the last appeal disposition.

## CONTACT

For additional information concerning this decision, contact: Nicholas Ettema, Fisheries Biologist, Mt. Whitney Ranger District, P.O. Box 8, Lone Pine, CA 93545; (760)-876-6211.

*Charles Wood*  
for: MARGARET WOOD  
District Ranger

*6/26/2012*  
Date

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