

DECISION NOTICE & FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT WEST TENSLEEP CORRIDOR MASTER RECREATION PROJECT

USDA FOREST SERVICE, BIGHORN NATIONAL FOREST
POWDER RIVER RANGER DISTRICTS
BIG HORN COUNTY, WYOMING

DECISION

Based on my review of the *West Tensleep Corridor Master Recreation Project EA* and the project record, I have decided to implement the proposed action. A summary of my decision is listed below. The EA contains more detailed descriptions of the planned actions (pages 4 through 6).

- ◆ West Tensleep Campground will be relocated about one-half mile south of its current location. This campground will be a tent-only facility with up to twenty sites. A new handicap accessible trail will be constructed from the new campground location past West Tensleep Lake connecting on to West Tensleep Trailhead.
- ◆ Deer Park Campground will be moved about five miles south on FSR 27 and renamed Warner Draw Campground. There will be a maximum of thirty sites, and the campground will be designed to accommodate recreational vehicles up to sixty-five feet long.
- ◆ West Tensleep and Deer Park campgrounds will be decommissioned (removed) after the new campgrounds are constructed.
- ◆ All dispersed camping from Tyrrell Work Center north and within the West and Middle Tensleep drainages (including that portion within Cloud Peak Wilderness) will be required to be self-contained for solid human waste.
- ◆ Dispersed camping will be permitted only at designated sites along Forest Road 27 from Tyrrell Work Center north to the end of the road at West Tensleep Trailhead and Campground. The designated sites will be marked by numbered posts. A maximum of forty sites will be allowed, depending upon specific site conditions. As time and funds permit, permanent fire rings will be installed at these sites, and upon installation, campfires will be restricted to the fire rings. Until the fire rings are installed, campfires will be allowed within fifty feet of the numbered posts marking the campsites.
- ◆ FSR 27 will retain its current management level from Tyrrell Work Center north to Island Park CG about 2.9 miles. The road width will be reduced to twenty-four feet, and it will be maintained at its current level (EA page 5).
- ◆ From milepost 2.9 to the end of the road at West Tensleep Trailhead, FSR 27 will have the road maintenance objectives reduced to a Level 3 (details in the EA, pages 5 and 6). Adaptive management actions will be taken on this nearly five-mile stretch to slow traffic speeds and improve visitor safety.

My decision is also responsive to internal and public concerns about the presence of improperly disposed human waste and toilet paper in the corridor (including the Cloud Peak Wilderness), the speed of traffic on FSR 27, and overuse at the West Tensleep Trailhead (EA pages 3 and 4). In response to comments received during scoping and comments on the notice of proposed action, I asked the interdisciplinary team to more clearly define the road management objectives for FSR 27 (EA pages 5 and 6) and to refine the design features and monitoring to address concerns about resource impacts and public safety (EA pages 6 through 8).

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

This action was listed in the Bighorn National Forest schedule of proposed actions (SOPA) on October 1, 2009. The EA lists agencies and people consulted on pages 19 and 20.

Public scoping was initiated January 26, 2011 when the legal notice was published in the Casper Star-Tribune. This notice and subsequent scoping documents were posted on the Bighorn National Forest website. More than twenty individuals, organizations, and agencies provided comments during the scoping period.

The proposed action and the purpose and need were refined in response to scoping comments, and a notice of proposed action (NOPA) and cover letter were distributed on October 19, 2011 to those who responded to the initial scoping. The legal notice for the NOPA was also printed in the Casper Star Tribune on the same date. Wyoming Wilderness Association responded to the NOPA; they concurred with the proposal. No other comments were received.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT AND OTHER LAWS AND REGULATIONS

After considering the environmental effects described in the EA, I have determined the proposed action will not have significant effects on the quality of the human environment based on the context and intensity (discussed below) of its impact (40CFR 1508.27). Therefore, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared.

Context

The West Tensleep Corridor Master Recreation Project area is located in the Bighorn Mountains in Big Horn County, Wyoming. Maps of the proposed actions are in the project record located at the Powder River Ranger District office in Buffalo, Wyoming. The effects are localized to this corridor.

Intensity

The intensity of effects was considered in terms of the following:

1. **Impacts may be both beneficial and adverse. A significant effect may exist even if the federal agency believes that, on balance, the effect will be beneficial.** My consideration of the intensity of environmental effects and my finding of no significant impacts was not biased by the beneficial effects of the action. While the proposed action will have beneficial impacts (for example, reduced resource damage and improved public health and safety), I considered the potential adverse impacts as well: displacement of some dispersed campers, reduced scenic integrity objectives in some areas, short-term

8. **The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.** The action will have no significant adverse effect on districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed, or eligible for listing, in the National Register of Historic Places. The action will also not cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources because a Class III heritage resource inventory report was completed for the project. The report recommended a finding of *no potential to cause effect*. The Wyoming State Historical Preservation Office (SHPO) concurred by letter on December 12, 2011.
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.** The action will not adversely affect any endangered or threatened plant species or plant habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, because no plant species have been identified as endangered or threatened (EA pages 17-18). This project will have no effect on the Canada lynx. There are no known occurrences of lynx on the forest, and lynx habitat is being maintained (EA page 15). The project will have no effect on greater sage grouse because they are not known to occur in the project area, and there is no suitable habitat (EA page 15).
10. **Whether the action threatens to violate federal, state, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.** The action will not violate federal, state, and local laws or requirements for the protection of the environment. Applicable laws and regulations were considered in the EA (EA pages 6, 9, 10, 13, 15, 17, and 18). The action is consistent with the forest plan (EA page 2 and pages 6 through 10). This action takes place within a portion of the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule boundary; however no tree cutting will take place so the project will not affect roadless characteristics and is consistent with current direction as documented in a February 15, 2012 e-mail from the R2 Regional Office (on file in the project record).

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW (APPEAL) OPPORTUNITIES

This decision is subject to administrative review (appeal) pursuant to federal regulations at 36 CFR part 215. Individuals or organizations who provided comment or otherwise expressed interest in the proposed action during the comment period may appeal. Notices of appeal that do not meet the content requirements of 36 CFR §215.14 or 36 CFR §251.90, as appropriate, will be dismissed. Names and addresses of appellants will become part of the public record.

This decision is also subject to appeal under federal regulations at 36 CFR part 251 subpart C by the special use permit holder (§251.86). However, the special use permit holder or applicant(s) must choose to appeal under either 36 CFR §251 or §215 but not both (§251.85). Notices of appeal that do not meet the content requirements of 36 CFR §215.14 or 36 CFR §251.90, as appropriate, will be dismissed. Names and addresses of appellants will become part of the public record.

IMPLEMENTATION DATE

Implementation of the selected alternative will occur under the authority of this FONSI, subject to the appropriate appeal and implementation procedures cited above. Acreages and locations are approximate and may vary slightly during implementation depending on site-specific conditions.

Pursuant to 36 CFR part 215, if no appeal is filed within the forty-five-day period, implementation of this decision may occur on, but not before, five business days from the close of the appeal filing period. If an appeal is received, implementation may occur on, but not before, the fifteenth business day following the date of the last appeal disposition.

Pursuant to 36 CFR part 251 subpart C, if no appeal is filed, implementation of this decision may occur on, but not before, five business days from the close of the appeal filing period. If an appeal is received, implementation may occur during the appeal process, unless the reviewing officer grants a stay (§251.91).

Implementation is expected to begin in the summer of 2013 with designation of the dispersed campsites, self-containment for solid human waste, and signing at West Tensleep Trailhead. The campground relocation and closure and adaptive road management objectives will be implemented as funds become available and when monitoring indicates they are needed.

CONTACT

For additional information concerning this decision, contact Craig Cope, District Recreation Staff, Powder River Ranger District, 1415 Fort Street, Buffalo, WY 82834, cccope@fs.fed.us, (307)-684-7806.



MARK BOOTH

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DATE