

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

WILLETT CREEK, FOREST SERVICE ROAD (FSR) 226 REROUTE PROJECT

**USDA Forest Service
Bighorn National Forest
Medicine Wheel Ranger District
Big Horn County, Wyoming**

The significance of environmental impacts must be considered in terms of context and intensity. This means that the significance of an action must be analyzed in several contexts such as society as a whole (human and national), the affected region, the affected interests, and the locality. Significance varies with the setting of the proposed action. In the case of a site-specific action, significance usually depends upon the effects in the locale rather than in the world as a whole. Intensity refers to the severity or degree of impact (40 CFR 1508.27).

CONTEXT

The Willett Creek, Forest Service Road (FSR) 226 Reroute project area encompasses, approximately, 0.6 acres of the Medicine Wheel Ranger District and is located within the Shell Creek - Willett Creek (HUC 6th level) Watershed. This watershed is within the Shell Creek Geographic Area. The project area includes National Forest System lands within the Roadless Area Conservation Rule designated area known as Cloud Peak Contiguous North (B031) which consists of 17,425 acres. The proposed new disturbance area is 0.00003% of the total roadless area. The character of the project area portion of the roadless area has been previously impacted by off-highway vehicles.

The Willett Creek FSR 226 Reroute project area is in Big Horn County, Wyoming within the central-western portion of the forest in Township 53 North, Range 88 West, Section 10. Within the project area, the 2005 Forest Plan prescribes a 3.31 Backcountry Recreation, Year-Round Motorized Use Management Area with desired conditions and guidelines including opportunities for semi-primitive motorized use. I find that the Willett Creek FSR 226 Reroute project is consistent with the forest plan allocated land uses.

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.** No significant effects were identified and documented in the environmental analysis for the following resources: Aquatic and Soil Resources (EA, pgs. 7-8); Cultural Resources (EA, pg. 8); Livestock Grazing, Rangeland Vegetation, and Invasive Species (EA, pgs. 9-10); Recreation (EA, pgs. 10-11); Wildlife and Plant Species (EA, pgs. 11-21); Roadless Characteristics (EA, pgs. 21-23). Consideration of the intensity of environmental effects is not biased by beneficial effects of the action.
2. **The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.** The proposed action will reduce public health and safety hazards associated with the existing crossing of the Willett Creek tributary.

3. **Unique characteristics of the geographic area, such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.** There will be no significant effects on unique characteristics of the area because no park lands, prime farmlands, wild and scenic rivers or ecologically critical areas will be affected by the project. No significant effects on unique characteristics of wetlands, historic or cultural resources were identified (EA, pgs. 8). Design features are in place to protect wetlands and cultural resources (EA, Table 2 pg. 6).
4. **The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.** The effects on the quality of the human environment are not likely to be highly controversial. There is no known credible scientific controversy over the impacts of the proposed action.
5. **The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.** The agency has considerable experience with actions like the ones proposed. The analysis shows the effects are not uncertain and do not involve unique or unknown risk (EA pages 7-23). The proposed reroute of FSR 226 is a common forest management activity with familiar effects.
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 action is not likely to establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects. There is no decision in principle about a future consideration.
7. **Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.** No significant cumulative impacts were identified (EA, pgs. 7-23).
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 in 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. Class III heritage resource inventories were completed and a report was submitted to the State Historical Preservation Office (SHPO). The Forest Service reached findings of *no adverse effect* through application of a protection measure and *no historic properties affected*. Wyoming SHPO concurrence was documented in a letter on April 15, 2015 (EA page 8).
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.

The Canada lynx is listed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as an endangered, threatened, or proposed species considered in the analysis. In addition, the analysis considered the Gray wolf (*Canis lupus*) which is listed as an Experimental Population, Non-Essential in the State of Wyoming. No "critical habitat" has been designated for the Canada lynx, gray wolf, or any other federally listed species on the Bighorn National Forest. The proposed action would not affect the

Canada lynx or the Gray wolf. There are no known residents of these species on the forest. Canada lynx and Gray wolf habitat is being maintained under the action (EA page 12).

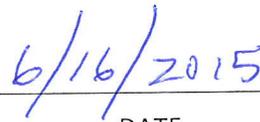
10. **Whether the action threatens to violate federal, state, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.** The action will not violate federal, state, and local laws or requirements for the protection of the environment. Applicable laws and regulations were considered in the EA. The action is consistent with the Bighorn National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan.

After considering the effects of the actions analyzed, in terms of context and intensity, I have determined that these actions will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment; therefore, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared.



DAVID HOGEN

Medicine Wheel District Ranger
Bighorn National Forest



DATE

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