



United States Department of Agriculture
Forest Service

Lake Superior Performance Rally Special Use Permit Project Decision Notice

Kenton, Ontonagon and Watersmeet Ranger Districts, Ottawa National Forest, Gogebic,
Houghton and Ontonagon Counties, Michigan

July 2014



For More Information Contact:

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*Photo on front cover: Photographer unknown

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Introduction

This final Decision Notice documents the selection of the Proposed Action, and therefore authorizes the special use permit for the Lake Superior Performance Rally project (herein referred to as the Rally). The Responsible Official for this project is Barbara C. Van Alstine, Kenton District Ranger on the Ottawa National Forest.

The project area is located on the Kenton, Ontonagon, and Watersmeet Ranger Districts, in Gogebic, Houghton and Ontonagon Counties of Michigan. The project area consists of 63 miles of road that form the Rally route, which traverse through Management Areas (MAs) 2.1, 3.1a, 4.1a and 8.1 (Land and Resource Management Plan¹ [Forest Plan], pp. 3-6 to 3-10; 3-16 to 3-26; and 3-71 to 3-81.9). See Appendix 1 for a map displaying the selected route.

The July 2014 Environmental Assessment documents the results of the effects analysis for two alternatives; the Proposed Action and No Action alternatives. Development of this EA was performed in accordance with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), National Forest Management Act (NFMA), and the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations at 40 CFR 1500-1508. This EA, and associated project file, is available for public review at the Ottawa's Supervisor's Office.

The scoping letter, EA and this Decision Notice is also available on the Ottawa's website: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/projects/ottawa/landmanagement/projects>, as well as the following libraries: Gogebic Community College, Ironwood Michigan; J. Robert Van Pelt Library, Michigan Tech University; and Olson Library, Northern Michigan University (NMU).

Background Information

The Rally is a motorized event that has occurred annually on the Ottawa National Forest for over 25 years. The Rally is a timed event involving 40 to 50, highway legal vehicles that follow pre-designated routes from checkpoint to checkpoint (e.g., stages). Cars race on identified roads only; each driver races alone, with an objective of completing the course in a shorter amount of time than competitors. The event can draw several hundred participants (drivers and support crews) and up to two thousand spectators. The Rally is managed by the Sports Car Club of America, who pays all costs associated with the event, including law enforcement patrols; as well as road maintenance costs before and after the event.

Objections Process

This final Decision Notice has been prepared in accordance with 36 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 218. These regulations became effective on March 27, 2013, as part

¹ The Forest Plan is located on the Ottawa's website at: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/ottawa/landmanagement/planning>.

of the Department of Agriculture's final rule for replacing the Forest Service's appeals process (36 CFR 215) with an objections process as outlined in 36 CFR 218).

I identified the scoping comment period as the official 30-day comment period for this project. This project is not subject to an objection filing period because no timely, specific written comments regarding the proposal were received during the designated opportunity for public comment held in May 2014 (36 CFR 218.12). Therefore, a draft decision to begin the objection period (in accordance with 36 CFR 218.7[b]) will not be prepared. More information about this rule is available at the Federal Register website (<http://www.federalregister.gov>, March 27, 2013 edition, pp. 18481-18504).

Description of the Final Decision

I propose to implement the Proposed Action as described in the July 2014 EA. I have determined that preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not necessary based upon the analyses presented in the EA, which includes the Finding of No Significant Impact (EA, pp. 9-17), as well as the entirety of the project file.

This Final Decision includes the following actions:

- Authorization of a 10 year special use permit to establish a set of routes for use in the annual Rally for the Sports Car Club of America as identified on the attached map.
- This special use permit allows use and occupancy of approximately 63 miles of road on National Forest System land as identified in Table 1 and the attached map. Not all roads may comprise the Rally route for any given year; this determination will be made by the permittee.
- Roads will be closed to the public from 6:00 PM to 6:00 AM for a one night event, which will occur on an annual basis. All operations will be limited to the permitted roads. Vehicle line up/parking and other event staging needs will occur on permitted roads only. Vehicle maintenance, if needed will occur off Forest.
- During the running of the Rally, all roads will be monitored by Forest Service employees for any safety or resource issues. If any situations arise during the event, a stage will be closed.
- To ensure safe driving conditions, road maintenance of permitted roads will be maintained prior to, and after the Rally, to the extent deemed necessary by Forest staff.
- The special use permit will include a set of stipulations to be followed to ensure natural resource protection and a safe recreational environment consistent with Forest Plan direction.

Table 1. Roads Authorized for the Rally Special Use Permit

Forest Road	Mileage	Ranger District
1300	10.2	Kenton
1320	3.7	
1334	2.5	
3500	9.1	
3610	3.8	
3630	5.1	
3660	0.7	
4580	4.4	
1460	3.8	
1470	6.4	
4500	13.3	Watersmeet
Total Miles	63 Miles	

Rationale for the Final Decision

As the Responsible Official, I have considered several factors during my evaluation of this project. I have reviewed the project file documentation, including the purpose and need for action; and the direction outlined in the Forest Plan. I have selected to implement the Proposed Action based on the following rationale.

Purpose and Need for the Proposal

My decision is responsive to the purpose and need for granting use and occupancy of National Forest System lands, as requested by the Sports Car Club of America for the Rally.

As this event attracts recreational users and spectators into the area, my decision to authorize the special use permit will meet the need to provide an opportunity to enhance multiple-use opportunities on the Ottawa. As a result, this Decision will also benefit the local economy and remain consistent with Goal 7 of the Forest Plan, which focuses on contributing to the social and economic vitality of local communities (p. 2-4).

An additional need was identified to ensure that roads under permit are returned to their original state and/or improved to provide a safe recreational environment following the annual Rally events. My decision addresses this need, and also ensures that roads provide a safe recreational experience for the events through pre-Rally road maintenance pending annual road condition survey information. Implementation of the permit stipulations will ensure that a safe environment for recreational users is maintained, while minimizing or eliminating impacts to natural resources.

Public Involvement and Tribal Consultation

Public involvement for this project was sought through a formal, 30-day comment period, which occurred concurrently with the scoping comment period in May 2014. No input or formal comments were received.

The scoping letter explaining the event and permit request, as well as the location and description of the proposed action, was sent to more than 120 parties, including local government agencies and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. This project was also announced through the Ottawa's Schedule of Proposed Actions² and publication of a legal notice in the May 6, 2014's edition of the Ironwood, Michigan *Daily Globe* newspaper.

The scoping documentation was sent to several Tribes, including local representatives of the Lac Vieux Desert (LVD) Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians and Keweenaw Bay Indian Community (KBIC). In addition, consultation with members of both LVD and KBIC Tribes occurred in 2013; no concerns were expressed.

Other Alternatives Considered

In deciding which alternative to implement, I also considered the No Action alternative and one alternative considered, but eliminated from detailed analysis. These alternatives provided a reasonable range of alternatives given that no comments were received to warrant a change to the scope of the proposal. The following discussion summarizes the other alternatives I considered and provides information as to why each is not being considered for implementation.

No Action

This alternative was developed in response to NEPA requirements for a No Action Alternative. It serves as a baseline for evaluating other alternatives during the effects analysis for proposal. Implementation of this alternative would not authorize the special use permit. Current activities, such as dispersed and developed recreation use, fire protection, public safety, and road maintenance within the project area would continue.

I have not selected the No Action alternative because it would not meet the purpose and need identified for the proposal. Specifically, this alternative would not be consistent with the Forest Plan's direction for providing diverse recreation opportunities and supporting the social and economic vitality of local communities (pp. 2-4).

Alternative Considered, but Eliminated from Detailed Analysis

The original route proposed by the permittee included 95 miles of road for use in the Rally. An internal concern was raised that approximately 31.8 miles of this proposal was managed under local county jurisdiction. I am unable to authorize use of roads not managed by the Ottawa National Forest. The selected route accounts for this change, as explained on page 7 of the EA.

² The Schedule of Proposed Actions is a report that contains a list of proposed actions that will begin or are currently undergoing environmental analysis and documentation.

Summary of Findings

My review of the analysis prepared by the ID Team indicates that this Decision is consistent with Forest Plan management direction, compliant with other applicable laws, and is responsive to the permit applicant, the Sports Car Club of America.

Although I anticipate that this Decision will not be acceptable to all, I believe that the Proposed Action provides the best option to support recreation opportunities on the Ottawa, as well as the local economy.

After thorough consideration, I have determined that this Decision will not constitute a major federal action, individually or cumulatively, and the Proposed Action would not significantly affect the quality of the human environment. The site-specific actions of the selected alternative, in both the short and long-term, would not be significant (EA, pp. 7-17). Therefore, I have determined that preparation of an environmental impact statement is not warranted.

Implementation

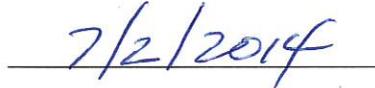
Pursuant to 36 CFR 218.12(d), this project can be implemented immediately.

Contact

For additional information about this project, please contact Chris Kovala, Environmental Coordinator, at (906) 852-3500.



BARBARA C. VAN ALSTINE



DATE



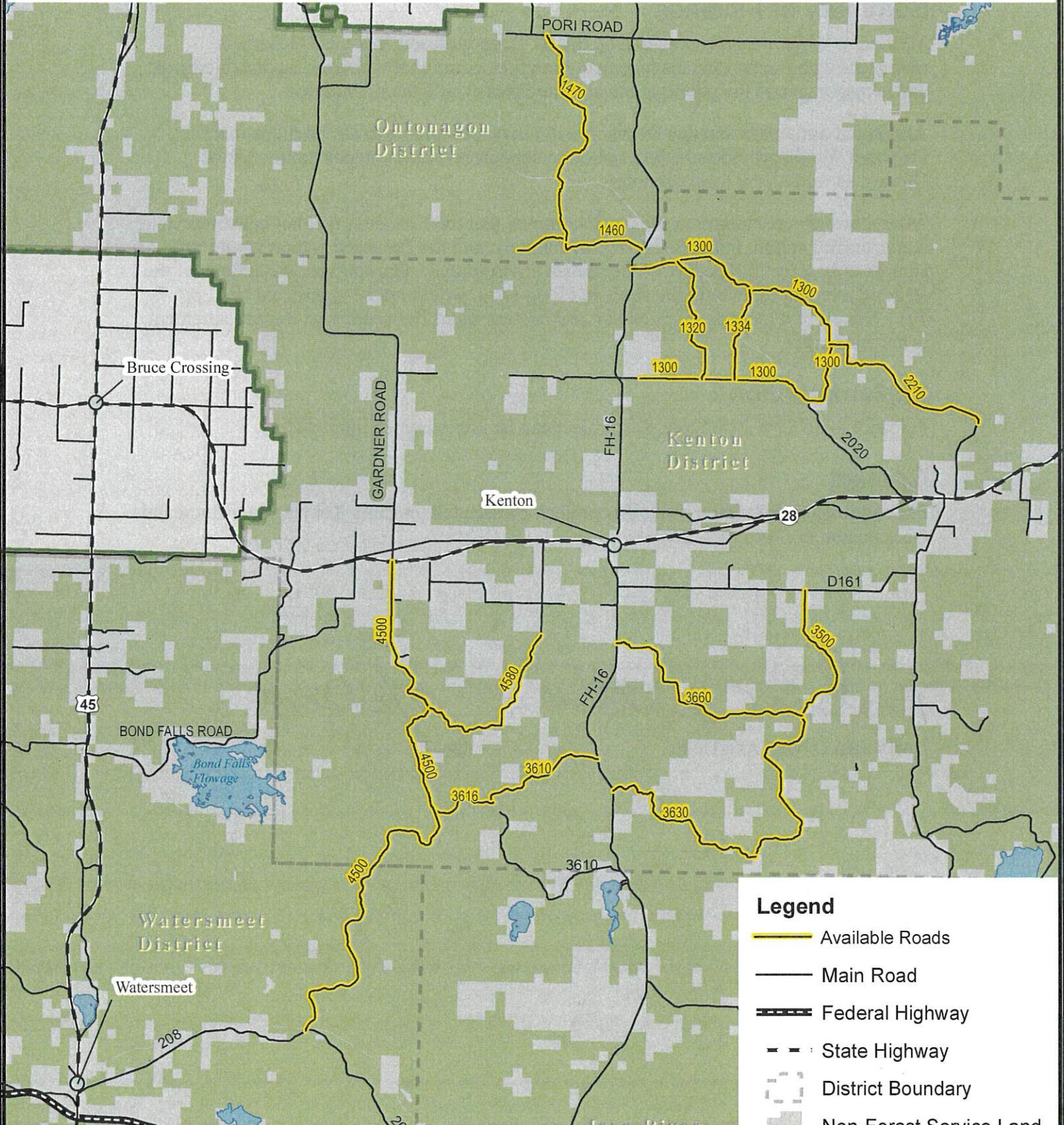
Lake Superior Performance Rally

Available Roads

Kenton, Ontonagon and Watersmeet Ranger Districts



O.T.T.A.W.A
NATIONAL FOREST



Legend

-  Available Roads
-  Main Road
-  Federal Highway
-  State Highway
-  District Boundary
-  Non-Forest Service Land
-  Forest Service Land
-  Forest Boundary



0 1 2 4 Miles

Compiled by the Ottawa NF using the most current and complete GIS data available. The GIS data displayed is intended for this project. Using the data other than for what it was created may yield inaccurate or misleading results.