



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

Spotted Bear  
Ranger District  
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P.O. Box 190340  
Hungry Horse, MT 59919

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**File Code:** 1950

**Date:** April 10, 2007

Dear Interested Party,

The Spotted Bear and Swan Lake Ranger Districts are seeking public input on project specific planning on the Bruce Creek, Alpine 7 and Napa Point Trails of the Southern Swan Crest on the Swan Lake and Spotted Bear Ranger Districts. The Districts propose closing the Bruce Creek and Napa Point Trails to motorized use and closing the Alpine 7 Trail to motorized use from its intersection with Bruce Creek south to the Napa Point Trail. These trails are currently open to motorcycle use.

### **Introduction**

On February 7, 2007 we sent out a letter asking for input on the implementation of a national rule regarding travel management and off-highway vehicles (OHVs) on the Spotted Bear Ranger District. This rule requires each National Forest to formally designate those roads, trails, and areas where motorized travel is permitted and to display them on a Motor Vehicle Use Map. Spotted Bear Ranger District is intending to complete travel planning and display this formal map by the end of September of this year. To help complete this analysis by September, we will use the following sideboards as previously presented. These included:

- Travel management planning has been ongoing on Spotted Bear Ranger District and on the Flathead National Forest in general for a number of years. It is expected to continue in the future as additional projects (i.e. vegetation management or other) could also consider additional travel management actions.
- Utilize the past site specific motorized decisions and implementation actions related to motorized access.
- Grizzly bear security needs remain a very important component related to motorized recreation opportunities.
- Use of motor vehicles is currently only allowed on designated motorized roads and trails; and cross country travel by a wheeled motor vehicle has been permissible within 300 feet or motorized roads and trails as per the January 2001 Off-Highway Vehicle Record of Decision for Region 1.
- The Motor Vehicle Use Map is to be reviewed, updated if needed, and reprinted for each Ranger District each year so this review is not a one time occurrence.
- Winter use will not be addressed by this effort. Over-snow vehicle use will continue to be managed under the current Winter Motorized Recreation Plan (Amendment 24) to the Forest Plan.



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To better explain how we were approaching this travel management planning process, and to display maps of current motorized road, trail, and area access to the district, we invited the public to an open house on February 22nd. At this open house, we asked people to inform us of any roads, trails or areas they believed existed and received motorized use, but were not displayed on the maps provided at this open house. We then asked people if they felt there was any need to change the existing designated motorized routes.

About 47 people attended the open house. We also received 57 letters, emails, other correspondence, phone calls, and visits providing us feedback to the questions we asked above.

The range of concerns we heard included:

- Provide additional roads and trails for motorized use
- Maintain the current amount of roads and trails open to motorized use
- Close some roads to motorized access
- Prohibit motorized use on some or all trails currently open to motorcycles

Based on the feedback we heard, the original sideboards, and ongoing analysis, we are proposing to prohibit motorized use on the Bruce Creek to Alpine 7 to Napa Point Trails. These three main trails are connected between the two Districts and form a logical group to analyze. These trails are currently open to single track motorized use.

This section of the Alpine 7 Trail is located on both the Swan Lake and Spotted Bear Ranger Districts, but management is coordinated by the Swan Lake Ranger District. The Napa Point Trail #31 is managed by the Swan Lake Ranger District, and the Bruce Creek Trail #82, Bruce Creek Entry Trail #82A (on closed Road 2827), Bunker Creek Trail #101, and Bunker-Alpine Connect Trail #101A are managed by the Spotted Bear Ranger District.

### **Purpose**

The primary goals of the Bruce Creek to Alpine 7 to Napa Point Motorized Trails Project would be to reduce current and future resource impacts on the trails and adjacent areas, to reduce current and future conflicts between motorized and non-motorized backcountry users on the Bruce Creek to Alpine 7 to Napa Point Trails of the Swan Crest. Currently the Napa Point, Alpine 7 to Crevice Lake trails are among the most popular hiking trails in the southern Swan Range and receive very limited motorcycle use. This change would virtually eliminate the potential for future use conflicts while displacing very little actual current motorized use. Closing the Bruce Creek trail to motorcycle use would increase grizzly bear security within the Jungle Addition Grizzly Bear Subunit.

### **Proposed Action**

This proposal is to close the following trails to wheeled motorized use:

- Alpine 7 Trail from its intersection with the Bunker-Alpine Connect #101A (near Crevice Lake) south to its intersection with the Napa Point Trail #31 (7.3 miles)
- Napa Point #31 (3.3 miles)
- Bruce Creek Entry #82A (on closed Road 2827) (2.7 miles)
- Bruce Creek #82 (3.5 miles)
- Bunker Creek #101, the upper part (2.0 miles)
- Bunker-Alpine Connect #101A (0.9 mile)

19.7 total miles (see enclosed map)

**Your Input is Needed**

For this project specific planning, you are invited to send or phone in any comments, suggestions, or concerns that you have regarding Bruce Creek to Alpine 7 to Napa Point Motorized Trails planning on the Swan Lake and Spotted Bear Ranger Districts. The comments received to date will also be considered. Please feel free to share this letter with neighbors or other interested parties in the event we have missed somebody. In the near future we are planning to put information on travel management planning for Spotted Bear Ranger District and the Flathead National Forest on the Flathead National Forest website: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/flathead/nepa/nepa.htm>

Please send written comments to us at Spotted Bear Ranger District, P.O. Box 190340, Hungry Horse, MT 59919 (or drop them off at our office – 8975 Highway 2 East, Hungry Horse, MT). To submit comments electronically, please send to: **comments-northern-flathead-spotted-bear@fs.fed.us**. Electronic comments must be submitted in rich text format (.rtf), Word (.doc) or Word Perfect format. The subject line must contain the name of the project for which you are submitting comments. You should normally receive an automated electronic acknowledgement from us as confirmation of receipt. If you do not receive an automated acknowledgement of the receipt of comments, it is your responsibility to ensure timely receipt by other means.

In order to be most useful to us, send or phone your comments by May 4, 2007. We expect a decision on this Bruce Creek to Alpine 7 to Napa Point Motorized Trails project to occur in July of 2007.

Dale Luhman, Project Leader, on Spotted Bear Ranger District, is the primary contact for this Bruce Creek to Alpine 7 to Napa Point Motorized Trails project, but you can contact any of us for further information.

<u>Spotted Bear-</u> (758-5376 after May 15)	<u>Swan Lake-</u>
Dale Luhman 387-3820	Andrew Johnson 837-7507
Deb Mucklow 387-3851	Steve Brady 837-7501

Thank you for your continuing interest and involvement in this project.

Sincerely,

DEB MUCKLOW  
Spotted Bear District Ranger

Enclosure - map of Bruce Creek to Alpine 7 to Napa Point Motorized Trails Project Area