



File Code: 2300/1900/2500/7300

Date: March 1, 2006

Dear Forest User:

The Forest Service is proposing to rehabilitate the Baño de Oro Bathhouse and Pool located at State Road PR 191 km 12.2, and we are inviting you to comment on this proposal.

Background

This project was originally proposed in 2002 and the public was invited to comment. Due to a variety of factors the Forest Service delayed work on the original proposal in 2003. At this time we have revised the proposed action and are reinitiating our efforts to rehabilitate the Baño de Oro Bathhouse.

Issues and Concerns

At this time, the Forest Service has not identified any significant issues which would lead to the development of additional alternatives to the proposed action. The Forest Service received 10 letters in response to the invitation to comment in 2002. Most letters expressed support for the proposal. Recommendations to consider during project development included the need to:

- 1) Meet historic preservation standards
- 2) Minimize impacts to desired plants such as Sierra palm trees or other forage associated with the Puerto Rican Parrot.
- 3) Maintain sediment retention structures to applicable State and Federal laws.
- 4) Minimize exposure of bare ground to rainfall by avoiding wet season construction.
- 5) Focus restoration activities on more prominent facilities such as graded trails, the La Mina bridge, and the Mount Britton tower and away from areas of public congestion. Also improving highway 191 and 988 by providing more turnouts at attractive locations.
- 6) Consider potential impacts from increased visitation and potential user conflicts.
- 7) Consider an option that only includes cleanup, assurance of public safety and an interpretive sign.

Historical and environmental recommendations can be adequately addressed through project design and incorporating Best Management Practices routinely used in projects of this nature. Consideration of other projects is beyond the scope of this analysis and may be addressed separately in the future. Demand for the area may increase; the level of use will be limited by available parking and will not result in unmanageable congestion. In addition, one of the purposes of this facility is to help disperse some of the current use in the area by providing an additional destination in the area. Considering a minimal improvement option as suggested is essentially addressed by consideration of a No Action Alternative.



Revised Proposed Action

The Forest Service Proposed Action at this time includes three primary areas of emphasis

- 1) Rehabilitation work would include modifying the front entry and doorways to the bathrooms, converting one window in each bathroom in to exterior doorways wide enough to accommodate wheelchairs, resurfacing walls and floors, replacing windows, replacing bathroom fixtures, and constructing ramps and other features to make the area universally accessible. This design would allow for the future option of a small souvenir shop or similar use within the building. In addition, the existing septic system is no longer serviceable and would be replaced with a 900 gallon septic tank and a 7,200 gallon holding tank to facilitate up to 800 persons/day during peak weekend periods and 100 persons per day during normal weekdays. The septic system would also include an emergency extraction pipe to allow pumping if necessary.
- 2) Rehabilitation of the pool to remove accumulated sediment, undesirable vegetation and provide a universally accessible wading pool that is 18 inches deep with a cement bottom.
- 3) Reconstructing, and constructing a section of trail by lengthening and adding a bridge to the existing trail in order to make it universally accessible. Re-conditioning sidewalks connected to the two existing parking areas, and two signed crossings on Road PR 191.

Additional information, including a site development plan, is available at the Forest Service office at the Catalina Service Center, Rio Grande, P.R.

Purpose and Need

Heritage Resources

Desired Future Condition: The Forest's heritage program contributes to Puerto Ricans' and visitors' regard and understanding of people and cultures that contributed and sacrificed to make the Puerto Rico of today.

"El Yunque's" contribution to the rich historic record of Puerto Rico is documented and interpreted for the public. Interpretive sites highlighting pre-Columbian and Spanish Colonial use of the Forest and the work of the Civilian Conservation Corps increase visitors' knowledge and enjoyment of heritage resources.

Develop opportunities to interpret heritage resources, with emphasis on pre-Columbian and Spanish Colonial period, and the Forest's Civilian Conservation Corps program of the 1930's. (LRMP, page 4-53).

Existing Condition and Need for Action: The facility is part of the rich Civilian Conservation Corps history on the Forest, but is not currently interpreted, so does not contribute to the visitors' knowledge and enjoyment of heritage resources

Forest Plan Management Area 2 - Developed Recreation

Desired Future Condition: The Forest provides a variety of developed recreation facilities to meet public demand for recreation opportunities. New sites have been constructed, and parking has been expanded or redesigned at several existing sites to satisfy demand previously unmet, or meet the needs of alternative transportation systems.

Recreation sites are attractive, clean, safe, well maintained, and provide universal access. Highly trained, equipped, and visible forest personnel and law enforcement officers insure visitors have a safe, enjoyable, and enriching recreation experience. Information is provided at each site to help visitors enjoy the range of recreation opportunities in adjacent Forest areas and develop understanding of ways to have little impact on the Forest environment (LRMP, page 4-68).

Existing Condition and Need for Action: At this time, the bathhouse and pool area are not maintained and are in an unusable state of disrepair. Nearby facilities are often crowded and do not meet the increasing public demand for recreation opportunities on the forest. Though Palo Colorado and Palma de Sierra visitor centers have been redesigned, much of these two facilities are not universally accessible; and the actual demand and capacity at these nearby sites is sometimes exceeded. The unmanaged Baño de Oro area is not presently universally accessible, nor does it help disperse recreational opportunities and reduce impacts to other areas.

Recreation

Desired Future Condition: The needs of people who come to visit and use the Forest are met with services and facilities which recognize and respond to the unique cultural context. Visitors feel welcomed by the service they receive from employees who exemplify Puerto Rico's tradition of hospitality

The different needs of Forest visitors are recognized and accommodated by providing opportunities and facilities for a wide variety of recreation experiences.

Interpretive and information service help visitors enjoy the Forest and develop a conservation ethic for Puerto Rico and tropical forests world-wide (LRMP, page 4-29).

Existing Condition and Need for Action: The bathhouse is in an unusable state of disrepair, the pool is heavily silted in from repeated flooding during hurricanes and is overgrown with vegetation. In addition, it is not interpreted, so this facility does not contribute to the desired conditions for recreation use on the forest.

Social and Economic

Desired Future Condition: The Forest contributes to Puerto Rico's social and economic well being by:

- Being sensitive to Puerto Rican culture and the pride the island has for "El Yunque" as one of its greatest national treasures. (LRMP, page 4-22).

Existing Condition and Need for Action The historic bathhouse and pool built by the CCC in the 1930's are in an unusable state of disrepair and do not contribute to the sensitivity of Puerto Rican culture and pride in "El Yunque".

Facilities and Transportation

Desired Future Condition: Public facilities are attractive, harmonizing with the natural and cultural environment, and are clean, safe, well maintained, and provide universal access. Administrative facilities support high quality resource protection and public service.

The transportation system is well planned, built and maintained. Traffic and parking are orderly even on busy summer weekends. Roads blend into the landscape and contribute minimal amounts of sediments to the streams.

Maintain existing roads and facilities to a high standard to enhance public service, protect natural resources, and protect capital investments.(LRMP, page 4-44)

Existing Condition and Need for Action: The structure at present is only minimally maintained for the purpose of conserving its structural integrity and to correct basic safety hazards. The facility is deteriorating quickly, is not open to the public, and is not universally accessible. There has been nearly no maintenance of the facility since Hurricane Hugo in 1989.

Public Involvement

Please review this information and provide us with comments by March 31, 2006. Your help now will enable us to make a well-informed decision. Comments are considered whenever we receive them, but are most effective if received early in the process.

Comments should be submitted to:

Pablo Cruz, Forest Supervisor,
Caribbean National Forest
HC 01 Box 13490
Rio Grande, PR 00745-9625

Comments may also be submitted by FAX or email at the following addresses.

FAX: 787-888-5685

email: comments-southern-caribbean@fs.fed.us

If you have any questions or would like further information, please contact Jeff Walker at the above address or by telephone at (787) 888-5660.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Pablo Cruz". The signature is written in black ink on a white background.

PABLO CRUZ
Forest Supervisor

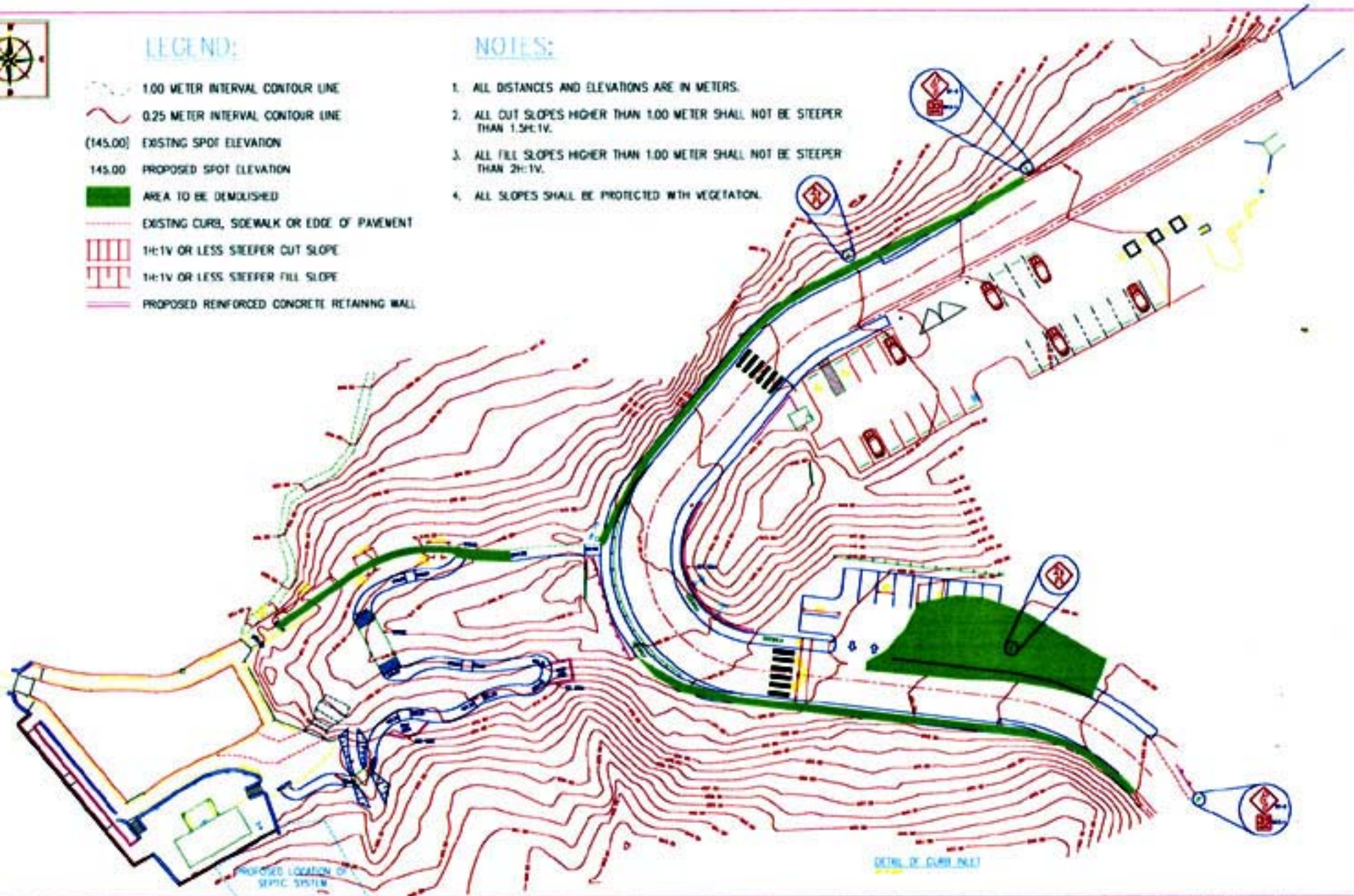


LEGEND:

- 100 METER INTERVAL CONTOUR LINE
- 0.25 METER INTERVAL CONTOUR LINE
- (145.00) EXISTING SPOT ELEVATION
- 145.00 PROPOSED SPOT ELEVATION
- AREA TO BE DEMOLISHED
- EXISTING CURB, SIDEWALK OR EDGE OF PAVEMENT
- 1H:1V OR LESS STEEPER CUT SLOPE
- 1H:1V OR LESS STEEPER FILL SLOPE
- PROPOSED REINFORCED CONCRETE RETAINING WALL

NOTES:

1. ALL DISTANCES AND ELEVATIONS ARE IN METERS.
2. ALL CUT SLOPES HIGHER THAN 1.00 METER SHALL NOT BE STEEPER THAN 1.5H:1V.
3. ALL FILL SLOPES HIGHER THAN 1.00 METER SHALL NOT BE STEEPER THAN 2H:1V.
4. ALL SLOPES SHALL BE PROTECTED WITH VEGETATION.



PROPOSED LOCATION OF SEPTIC SYSTEM

DETAIL OF CURB PLAN



USDA FOREST SERVICE

DESIGN FOR BAÑO DE ORO REHABILITATION
CARRETERA NATIONAL FOREST
RIO GRANDE

PUERTO RICO

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

DATE: 8/24/75
BY: [signature]

REVISIONS

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