

Scoping Document: Rooks Creek Restoration and Road Improvement Project 1/26/06

Proposed Action

The Ketchum Ranger District proposes to:

1. Re-align approximately 250 feet of the of the Rooks Creek road, number # 021.
2. Construct a new hardened ford across Rooks Creek at the upstream end of the proposed re-alignment to connect to the existing road.
3. Reclaim approximately 250 feet of road and the ford that the proposed re-alignment would replace.

The proposed project would improve motorized access in the Rooks Creek drainage as well as improve watershed, fisheries, and riparian conditions. This project proposal is located near the mouth of the Rooks Creek drainage, Township 4 North, Range 16 East, Section 26, NW1/4 of SE ¼.

Specific direction concerning this project can be found in the 2003 Sawtooth National Forest Land and Resources Management Plan (Forest Plan) for Management area 4, Big Wood River. Objectives 0438 and 0441 in the Forest Plan provide direction for the proposed Rooks Creek project area. Objective 0438 specifically provides direction to restore watershed and floodplain function and reduce accelerated sediment by modifying roads. Objective 0441 provides direction to maintain or restore Wood River sculpin habitat where main stem streams have been altered by development or other activities. Further direction can be found in the Forest Plan concerning facilities and roads on pages 111-58

through 111- 60.

In order to be compliant with the Clean Water Act an approved stream alteration permit will be needed from the Idaho Department of Water Resources, Army Corps of Engineers, and the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality.

Background Information

This proposed road re-alignment project is located in the Rooks Creek drainage a sub-watershed of the Warm Springs Creek drainage. In the lowermost portion of the Rooks Creek drainage the Rooks Creek road lies within a very constricted drainage bottom occupying a portion of the floodplain for a short distance. The road fords Rooks Creek a short distance up the canyon and is located immediately adjacent to the stream channel for approximately 250 feet past the ford. This road segment is very narrow, situated on a steep slope, and is difficult to maintain and navigate. Because of its proximity to the stream this road segment directly contributes sediment to Rooks Creek, damages riparian habitat and contributes to stream channel instability. Every year the ford captures a portion of Rooks Creek resulting in water running down the road for about 200 feet before re-entering the stream channel. Depending upon the severity of runoff the flooded road segment may be difficult if not impossible to navigate in the spring. The ford itself is difficult to navigate because of its rocky nature and steepness on the north side. This ford has been repaired several times but continues to “blow out” primarily due to its location and the rocky, constricted nature of the drainage bottom at this location.

A small rock quarry is located immediately opposite (west) of the ford and the road segment proposed for reclamation. Access for the rock quarry parallels Rooks Creek and is composed of smaller diameter rock. This access route is wider, flatter, more stable, and further from the stream than the road segment proposed for reclamation. The proposed project would utilize this existing access route to re-align the road segment proposed for reclamation. At the upper end of this access route the canyon bottom opens up and presents an opportunity to place

a hardened ford across Rooks Creek to reconnect to the Rooks Creek road. This location is much better situated and more stable for a ford than the present location.

The segment of road proposed for reclamation would be re-contoured and woody debris and vegetation would be placed on the reclaimed segment to help stabilize the soil. Disturbed soil would be seeded with a native seed mix. In order to prevent the road from capturing Rooks Creek during high and moderate flows the banks at the ford location proposed for abandonment would be rebuilt. Log revetments, rock and willow plantings are proposed to rebuild these banks to improve channel stability and prevent water from flowing down the road. A backhoe or tracked excavator would be used to construct the proposed ford and perform proposed reclamation work. If implemented the proposed road realignment and reclamation work would be done during low flows in late summer or fall.

Motorized access into this drainage may need to be closed for a short period in order to implement this project.

Public Comment

Your input is important. If you have any thoughts or concerns about this proposal, please take time to share them with us. To be used most effectively, comments should be received no later than March 24, 2006. Please direct your comments to Bill Whitaker on the Ketchum Ranger District, (208) 622-5371. Written comments can be sent to: Ketchum Ranger District, PO Box 2356, Ketchum ID 83340. E-mail comments may be sent to: comments-intermtn-Sawtooth-Ketchum@fs.fed.us. Please be advised that comments received on this project, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record and will be available for public inspection.

