



File Code: 1900

Date: April 22, 2008

Dear Interested Party:

The USDA Forest Service, Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area (CRGNSA), is proposing an area recreation development plan for the Burdoin Mountain, Coyote Wall and Catherine Creek areas in Klickitat County, Washington (see attached map). We are taking initial comments on the proposed action which was developed collaboratively with the public. You are being notified because you have been identified as an interested party, and/or you own land adjacent to National Forest lands in the area.

Background

The Forest Service purchased several thousand acres of land in the Burdoin Mountain, Coyote Wall and Catherine Creek areas. The area has become very popular for recreation use, particularly for hikers and mountain bikers. Many of the uses and trails were established before the Forest Service acquired the land, for example, mountain biking on former Kreps land on Coyote Wall. The Open Space Plan for the Catherine Creek/Major Creek area anticipated a use pattern with dispersed recreation in this area rather than trails.

Purpose and Need for the Proposal

These existing trails are located on a mix of public and private lands. Landowners in the area have commented about trespass from recreationists. Resource damage (e.g. soil erosion) is visible in some areas. No formal trailheads exist, with users parking along wide spots along roads. For these reasons, an approved, environmentally sustainable trail system that respects private property needs to be identified and established. The purpose of the proposed action is to recognize and address the current uses, establish a trail network that is compatible with the environment as well as private property concerns, and to formally authorize a recognized multi-use non-motorized trail system with associated parking, kiosks, and other support facilities in the Burdoin Mountain, Coyote Wall and Catherine Creek area.

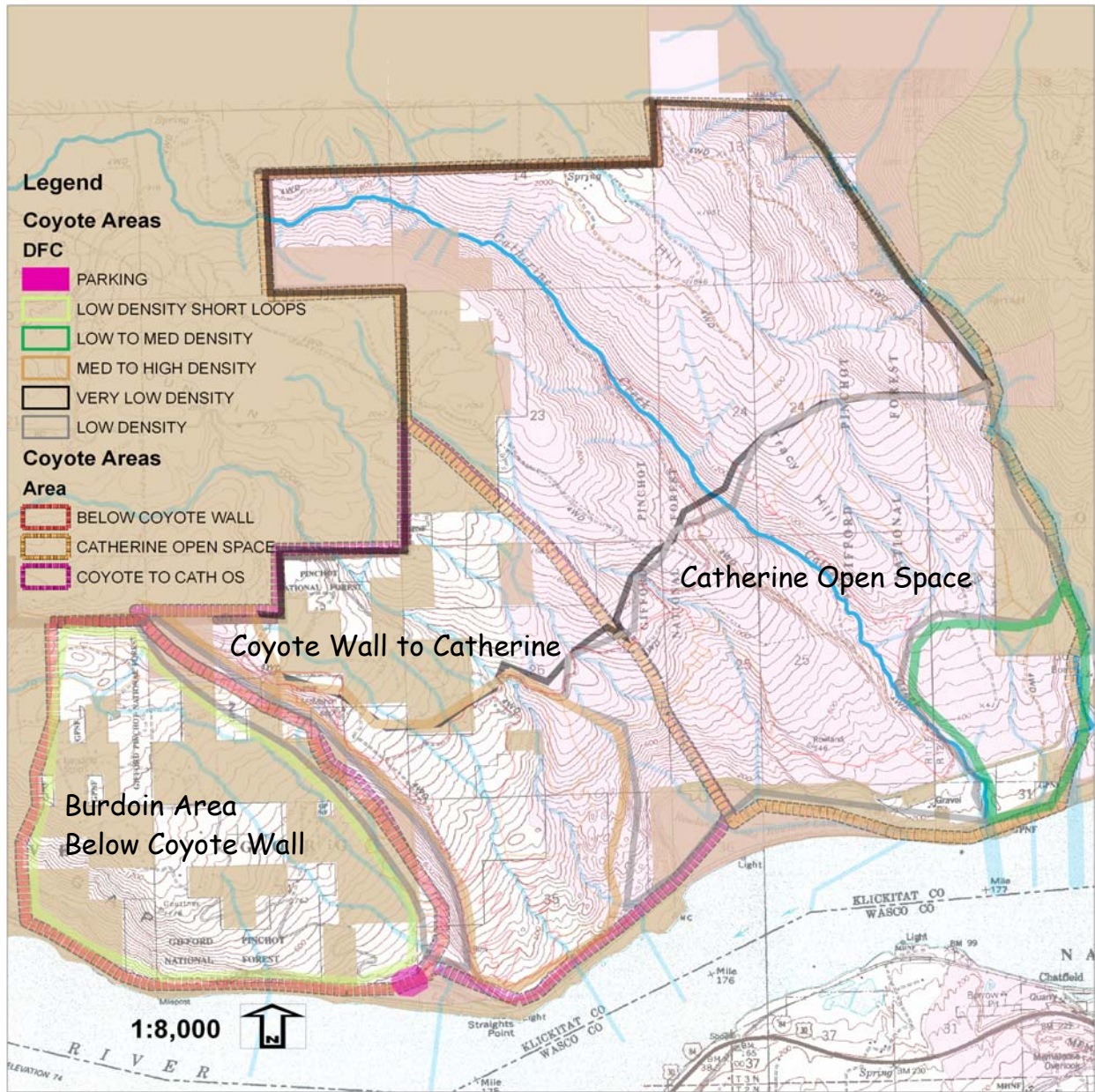
Location

The planning area is National Forest System Lands within the Burdoin Mountain, Coyote Wall and Catherine Creek area from near the SMA boundary east of Bingen, to Major Creek, and from SR-14 north to the extent of consolidated National Forest land. The Legal Description is: Washington State, Klickitat County, Township 3 North, Range 11 East, and Township 3 North, Range 12 East.

Proposed Action Development Process

The Forest Service held 3 large public meetings and 3 small working group meetings in 2008 in order to gather the information needed to design a proposed action for analysis. As part of this process, the working group created a map dividing the recreation area into three logical sections and designed desired future conditions for each section. The map on the next page displays these areas and the desired trail densities the group recommended.





Proposed Action

The proposed action is summarized below and on the map on page 4. The Forest Service used all the work from the collaborative effort as well as individual comments on the issues to create this proposal. The information used for development of this proposed action can be found in detail on the CRGNSA website: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/columbia/projects/>.

Trail Density and Users

There are about 36 miles of existing trails and the proposed network reduces this to 27 miles. The proposal would allow mixed use trails in most of the Burdoin and Coyote Wall areas while restricting use to hiking only in the Catherine Open Space area (see also map on page 4).

Catherine Open Space-Very low density in northern section to moderate density near SR-14.

Coyote Wall to Catherine-Moderate to high density south of the areas of private land.

Burdoin, Below Coyote Wall –Moderate density limited by land ownership patterns.

Parking Areas

The main parking area will be located on FS lands at the bottom of Courtney Road and avoid conflict with cultural resources in the general vicinity. Additional parking in the Burdoin area will be analyzed.

Riparian and Other Sensitive Areas

Riparian areas would be buffered and there would be a minimal but adequate number of stream crossings for the trails. Trails and trail crossings would be located and designed to minimize resource impacts. Kiosks at trailheads would be used to educate users regarding trail etiquette and sensitive resource needs.

Other Sensitive Areas: The trails would be located to avoid adverse impacts to cultural and other sensitive areas such as talus, cliff faces, and oak savannas. The most sensitive areas would contain very limited trails and use would be limited to hiking. Trail locations would be field verified.

Private Land Protection

Catherine Open Space –All trails will be located on public land. No trails will be located on or lead to private or Tribal land.

Coyote Wall to Catherine-No system trails would be allowed to the north of the Atwood Road in order to protect private lands. Klickitat County will be consulted in order to resolve any land ownership/use issues regarding the proposed trail on Atwood Road.

Burdoin, Below Coyote Wall –No trails will be located on or lead to private land.

Conflict Resolution and Management

Prohibited uses in sensitive areas would be enforced through the cooperation of users and the Forest Service. Trails would be offered “up for adoption” to help with trail maintenance with the cooperation of user groups. Interpretative signing would be used to increase awareness of potential impacts, hunting season, and the need to stay on trails. The area would be monitored for weed introduction and steps taken to eradicate as needed. Dogs would be required to be under control at all times.

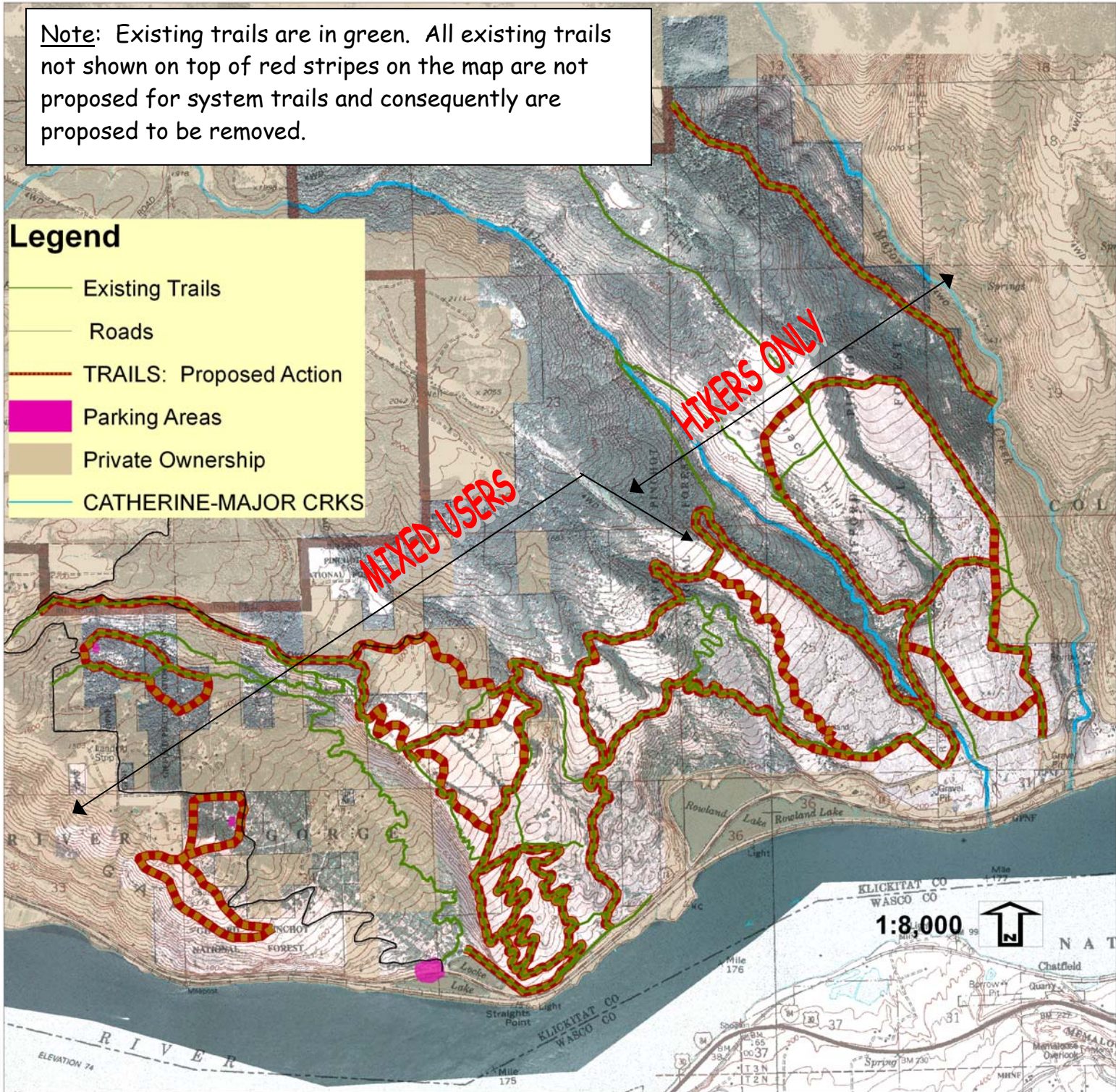
Note: Existing trails are in green. All existing trails not shown on top of red stripes on the map are not proposed for system trails and consequently are proposed to be removed.

Legend

- Existing Trails
- Roads
- TRAILS: Proposed Action
- Parking Areas
- Private Ownership
- CATHERINE-MAJOR CRKS

MIXED USERS

HIKERS ONLY



Request for Comments

We are interested in any comments you may have on the proposed action described in this letter. Over the next several months, the Forest Service will conduct the analysis and then provide a draft document for public review.

Please mail any comments on this proposal to Daniel Harkenrider, Area Manager, at 902 Wasco, Suite 200, Hood River, Oregon, 97031. You may email comments to comments-pacificnorthwest-columbia-river-gorge-nsa@fs.fed.us. Comments must be received by May 22, 2008. You may also contact the recreation manager Stan Hinatsu at (541)308-1708, the planner, Diana Ross at (541)308-1716 or Greg Cox, the Staff Officer at (541)308-1732 with any questions. The Forest Service will utilize email and its website in this planning process, and would greatly appreciate receiving the email address of those who wish to participate in this project. Those who respond to this letter or who request it will remain on our project mailing list. Thank you.

Sincerely,

/s/Daniel T. Harkenrider

DANIEL T. HARKENRIDER
Area Manager