



DECISION MEMO  
Special Use Permit – Klickitat River  
Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area  
USDA Forest Service; Klickitat County, Washington  
T.3N., R.12E., Sections in 24, 25, 26  
T.3N., R.13E., Sections in 5, 8, 17, 18, 19

**Proposed Action:** The Forest Service proposes to issue a one-year Special Use Permit for spay-cast fly-fishing in the designated National Wild and Scenic section of the Klickitat River.

**Background:** As part of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Act, the Klickitat River was designated as a Recreational River within the National Wild and Scenic River System in 1986. There are currently two kayaking school permits, one rafting permit, and two fishing permits for this portion of the river.

**Location:** The Klickitat River is in portions of Sections 24, 25, 26 of Township 3 North, Range 12 East and portions of Sections 5, 8, 17, 18, and 19 of Township 3 North, Range 13 East of the Willamette Meridian. This area is located in Klickitat County.

**Purpose:** Under Public Law 99-663 (November 17, 1986) the Department of Agriculture became the responsible agency for administering the Lower Klickitat Wild and Scenic River.

**Need:** There is a need to provide for diverse outfitting and guiding services that address concerns of public health and safety. In addition, there is a need for partnering with business to provide an opportunity to educate the public on the natural resources and to protect the outstanding and remarkable values, as defined by the Klickitat River Wild and Scenic River Management Plan.

**Scoping and Public Involvement:** A scoping letter describing the project was sent to a mailing list of known interested parties and adjacent landowners and posted on the planning website for the Scenic Area on April 7, 2008. Thirteen comments were received during the scoping period. Many of these comments were outside the scope of the project or not substantive to the proposal. Comments that were considered include concerns with protecting the recreation experiences on the river, and protecting fish habitat and following all applicable laws, regulations, policies and plans.

The permit would only be for weekdays to help reduce the levels of use on the weekends and manage the recreation experience. The permittee would be required to avoid vegetated areas to protect the habitats. All permits require that applicable federal, state and county laws are followed, and the proposed use would not conflict with any of these or with the management plans.



Many of the comments were related to the concern over increasing the fishing pressure and the catch and release causing harm to fish. Fishing harvest levels are the responsibility of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and therefore outside the scope of the Forest Service's authority. Each year, regulations are reviewed and annual levels set to specifically protect weak fish stocks while targeting plentiful hatchery or wild stocks (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/factshts/harvest.htm>). Hooking mortality, increasing fishing effort, fluctuating run size, and need for emergency closures are some of the information that are considered by the WDFW annually. Permittees and their clients shall follow current fishing regulations, and are thus not expected to harm sensitive fish stocks. Permittees help educated the public on species identification, and proper catch-release techniques.

**Reason for Categorically Excluding the Proposed Action:** I have determined that the proposed action is categorically excluded. Therefore, neither an environmental impact statement nor environmental assessment will be prepared. I make this determination based on the following findings:

1. The proposed action fits under Category 8, Section 31.12 Forest Service Handbook 1909.30 (February 15, 2007): “Approval, modification, or continuation of minor (one year or less) special uses of National Forest System lands.”
2. I have found the proposal does not involve extraordinary circumstances:
  - a. The biological evaluation concluded that there would be no effects to any threatened, endangered or sensitive species of plant or animal or habitat.
  - b. Forest Service reviewers did not identify any adverse effects to flood plains, wetlands, municipal watersheds or other special areas or resources.
  - c. The area is in the congressionally designated Lower Klickitat Wild and Scenic River. The proposed project does not conflict with the Management Plan for this area and is not inconsistent with the designation.
  - d. The project is not located within or adjacent to any inventoried roadless areas, Research Natural Areas or Washington State Natural Area Preserves.
  - e. The project does not affect any reserved treaty rights of Native Americans.
  - f. There are no unusual effects to minority or low-income populations by the proposed action.
3. I have determined that the proposed action is consistent with the Land and Resource Management Plan for the Gifford Pinchot National Forest as amended by the Northwest Forest Plan, and the Lower Klickitat River Wild and Scenic River Management Plan.
4. The permitted use would be adjacent to wetlands and in areas meeting the definition of a riparian reserve, but the activities are not expected to have a potential effect on these resource conditions. The bulk of the activity is on the water with little to no impacts to flora. Take-in and take-out will occur at established locations and again will have little impacts. Mitigations would also be built into a permit to protect these resources.

**Decision:** It is my decision to issue a one-year Special Use Permit for spay-cast fly-fishing outfitting and guiding services on the Lower Klickitat Wild and Scenic River.

Implementation of the project meets the stated purpose and need and can be accomplished with minimal environmental impacts. Operating conditions will be included in the permit for protection of resources. Conditions would include guidelines for requiring the permittee to be aware of landownership patterns and boundaries in respect to private property rights in the permit area. All permittees must follow State, Federal and local regulations, including fishing regulations. The permit will not allow disembarking in vegetated areas along the river. Between Nov. 15 and March 15, guides will not be allowed to stop when within 400 feet of bald eagles.

**Implementation Date:** This project may begin immediately. This decision is not subject to appeal pursuant to Forest Service regulations at 36 CFR 215.12(f) and can be implemented upon signature of this Decision Memo.

**Contact Person:** The Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area staff prepared an analysis file in conjunction with this project. For further information, contact Jennifer Wade at the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area, 541-308-1705.



DANIEL T. HARKENRIDER  
Area Manager

June 23, 2008