

DECISION MEMO
Tibble Fork Trails Re-route

USDA Forest Service
Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest
Pleasant Grove Ranger District
Utah County, Utah

I. DECISION

1. Description of Decision

I have decided to implement the Re-route and rehabilitate portions of the Mill Canyon (#040), Tibble Fork (#041), and Mud Springs (#173) Trails and to install a foot bridge across the American Fork River accessing the above mentioned trail system. See attached map.

The project will include the following design features and Best Management Practices (BMPs), as well as all other applicable 2003 Uinta National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan standards and guidelines and other relevant direction:

- Equipment crossing/in-channel work to be completed in low to no flow periods. Minimize disturbance in the channel by conducting only essential access and work in the stream area. Conduct staging activities, material/equipment storage well away from the stream. Use physical markers to delineate the area to be disturbed.
- Lop/scatter vegetation and debris on disturbed areas and obliterated trail prism to capture/filter sediment and increase groundcover following disturbance. If groundcover is not adequate, additional mitigation, such as mulching may be required.
- Install silt fence or straw waddles to reduce potential sediment delivery to stream channels within the project area.
- Install signing to reroute trail to prevent users from using obliterated trail segment.
- Obliterate/re-contour old trail prisms to discourage use of old trail segments.
- Use BMPs for new trail construction. These should include full bench cuts, outsloped trail surface, and rolling grade dips on new trail segments. Crib wall construction may be necessary to allow adequate turn radius for users.

2. Purpose of the Decision

To re-route and rehabilitate several trails within the Tibble Fork Trail System (Mill Canyon (#040), Tibble Fork (#041), and Mud Spring Trails (#173), and

install a foot bridge across the American Fork River. The implementation of the project will reduce resource degradation and provide safer travel for the public on the Tibble Fork Trail system.

3. Need for Decision

Mill Canyon (#040), Tibble Fork (#041), and Mud Springs Trails (#173) are highly utilized multiple-use trails. The trail system was originally created by sheep herders and sometimes follows drainage bottoms with steep sidewalls. During spring run off and heavy rainfall events, the trails develop a “canal effect”, disrupting natural run off patterns and adversely impacting wetlands and riparian areas. Where channels have been incised or in areas that collected large amounts of water, parallel routes have been established to avoid the hazard creating a braided trail system causing even greater resource impacts.

These trails were inherited from historical use and facilitate getting from one place to another. They were never designed for the existing uses. Some sections meet current uses, but several sections do not meet Forest Service standard, creating unsafe conditions and environmental hazards. In previous years closure orders have been enacted by the Forest Supervisor during spring run off to address unsafe conditions and resource damage.

II. REASONS FOR CATEGORICALLY EXCLUDING THE DECISION

Decisions may be categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement or environmental assessment when they are within one of the categories identified by the U.S. Department of Agriculture in 7 CFR part 1b.3 or listed in 36 CFR 220.6 (d) or (e), and there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the decision that may result in a significant individual or cumulative environmental effect.

A. Category of Exclusion

The proposed projects fit within categories identified by the Chief of the Forest Service for categorical exclusion as follows:

Rerouting and Rehabilitation of the Tibble Fork Trail System fits under FSH 1909.15, Section 31.2, Category. 1:

Construction and reconstruction of trails

B. Extraordinary Circumstances

The federal regulations at 36 CFR 220.6 (b) list the following resource conditions that should be considered in determining whether extraordinary circumstances related to a proposed action warrant further analysis and documentation in an EA or EIS:

1. Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species.

The Endangered Species Act requires that federal activities do not jeopardize the continued existence of any species federally listed or proposed as threatened or endangered or result in adverse modification to such species' designated critical habitat.

No effects are expected to occur to listed species or their habitats. The potential effects of the proposed action on species or critical habitat listed under the Endangered Species Act were reviewed and documented by a botanist, fisheries biologist, and wildlife biologist from the Uinta National Forest (Biological Assessment, project file). It was determined that the proposed action would have "No Effect" on the following species classified under the Endangered Species Act or their critical habitat: Western yellow-billed cuckoo (Candidate), Canada lynx (Threatened), Ute Ladies'-tresses (Threatened), Desert milkvetch (Threatened), clay phacelia (Endangered), Utah valvata snail (Endangered), and June Sucker (Endangered).

2. Floodplains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds

Floodplains: Executive Order 11988 requires federal agencies to avoid adverse impacts associated with the occupancy and modification of floodplains.

Wetlands: Executive Order 11990 requires federal agencies to avoid adverse impacts associated with destruction or modification of wetlands.

There are no wetlands within the project area.

Municipal Watersheds: This project is not located within a municipal watershed.

The Forest Service has determined that this project will not adversely affect floodplains, wetlands or municipal watersheds. The project area is located in a Class I Riparian Habitat Conservation Area. Through design features and

implementation of Best Management Practices, potential impacts to soils, stream and water quality will be minimal.

3. Congressionally designated areas, such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or National Recreation Areas:

The project area does not reside in, and the project will not have any direct, indirect or cumulative impacts on, any wilderness, wilderness study areas, or national recreation areas.

4. Inventoried roadless areas or potential wilderness area:

The project area does not reside in, and the project will not have any direct, indirect or cumulative impacts on, any inventoried roadless areas (IRAs) or potential wilderness areas.

5. Research Natural Areas:

The project area does not reside in, and the project will not have any direct, indirect or cumulative impacts on, any research natural areas.

6. American Indians and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites:

Heritage resource inventories of the areas of potential effects for the trail realignment were completed in June 2008. No sites of any kind were found that will be affected by this project. As a result, no American Indians religious or cultural sites will be affected by the proposed project (See project file).

7. Archeological sites, or historic properties or areas:

Heritage resource inventories of the areas of potential effects for the trail realignment were completed in May 2003. No historic properties (national register eligible sites) will be affected by the proposed project (See project file).

For projects that are categorically excluded, there is no need to repeat a detailed analysis of effects to all resources. In promulgating the categories, the Forest Service has concluded that projects that fit those categories do not individually or cumulatively have a significant effect on the human environment. Thus, once the analysis establishes that this project has no extraordinary circumstances and fits into a category, the responsible official can reach the conclusion that there will be no significant effects to the environment without further analysis.

The proposed action will be of limited context and intensity and will not result in any significant environmental effects (40 CFR 1508.4) individually or cumulatively on the quality of the human environment; is within a 36 CFR 220.6

(e); and there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action.

III. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND SCOPING

A proposal to reroute and rehabilitate the American Fork Trail system was first listed in the Schedule of Proposed Actions Winter 2007 edition. The proposal was provided to the public and other agencies for comment during scoping initiated February 20, 2008. In addition, a request for comments on the proposed action was published in the *Provo Daily Herald* on March 27, 2008.

In response to the solicitation and outreach, five comments were received supporting the proposed action:

1. The need to correct deficiencies in the Mill Canyon (#40), Tibble Fork (#41), and Mud Spring (#173) trails.

When designing the new sections of trail, there will be standard trail signs at each junction. When the project is completed, maps will be updated to reflect the changes to the trail system. The Trail system will be re-constructed to Forest Service Trail standards.

2. The proposed re-route actions do not change the use levels or types, and no changes in motorized versus non-motorized trail use authorization.

Currently, the authorized use of the trail system includes hiking, biking, equestrian, and single track motorized activities. The proposal will not change the current authorization.

3. Provide safe and environmentally sound trail systems that will minimize sediment loss from the watershed. Providing safe crossing of the American Fork River through the construction of a foot bridge will help the public to safely use the re-located trail system and should receive high priority in this phased project. Efficient use of appropriated funds should lead the Forest Service to use an appropriate level of environmental analysis that will disclose the impacts and address the benefits of this proposal.

The decision is categorically excluded from further analysis and documentation in an environmental impact statement or environmental assessment as it is one of the categories identified by the Chief of the Forest Service in Forest Service Handbook 1909.15 sections 31.2(1), and no extraordinary circumstances related to the decision will result in a significant individual or cumulative environmental effect. The level of analysis for this project has been sufficient to evaluate the environmental effects both positive and negative. Currently dollars from the Recreation Enhancement Act and the use of it as matching funds to acquire additional funding through grants is how the project funded. Minimal appropriated dollars are being used towards this project.

4. Concern was with inadequate maps and opening the trail system to ATV's and motorcycles.

Currently, the authorized use of the trail system includes hiking, biking, equestrian, and single track motorized activities. The proposal will not change the current authorization. Updates to the maps and trail system signs are included in project implementation.

5. Trail improvements are needed and the indication of volunteering time to implement the project.

The Pleasant Grove Ranger District involves volunteers with many of the projects we are responsible for. The intent and funding of the Tibble Fork Trail System re-routes and rehabilitation also is to utilize volunteers to implement this project and additional grant monies to accomplish the related work.

IV. FINDINGS REQUIRED BY AND/OR RELATED TO THEIR LAWS AND REGULATIONS

My decision will comply with all applicable laws and regulations. I have summarized some pertinent ones below:

Endangered Species Act – See Section II, Item B1 of this document.

National Historic Preservation Act – See Section II, Item B6 of this document.

Archaeological Resources Protection Act – See Section II, Item B6 of this document.

National Environmental Policy Act – This Act requires public involvement and consideration of potential environmental effects. The documentation of this decision supports compliance with this Act.

National Forest Management Act - This Act requires all projects and activities are consistent with the Forest Land and Resource Management Plan.

The Tibble Fork Trails Re-route and Rehabilitation Project are consistent with the 2003 Uinta National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (2003 Forest Plan). The project area lies within the American Fork Management Area as identified in the Forest Plan. The management prescription for the project area is primarily 3.2 Watershed Emphasis, and 4.4 Dispersed Recreation along the American Fork River Corridor (Forest Plan, page 5-11). The Recreation Opportunity Spectrum designation for the area is Semi-Primitive Motorized (Forest Plan, page 5-18), and the Visual Quality Objective is Retention and Partial

Retention (Forest Plan, page 5-25). The activities may be evident to the recreation user while the project is being implemented.

This area is identified as a Class I Riparian Habitat Conservation Area (Forest Plan, page 5-85). Activities associated with the decision will not impact this area. The project is consistent with the Clean Water Act.

V. ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW OF APPEAL

Pursuant to 36 CFR 215.12(f) and Earth Island Institute v. Ruthenbeck, No. CIV F-03-386 JKS (E.D. Cal., October 19, 2005), this decision is not subject to appeal.

VI. IMPLEMENTATION DATE

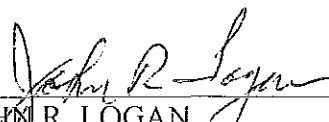
This project will be implemented on or after October 1, 2008

VII. CONTACT PERSON

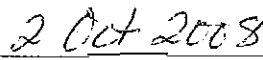
For further information about this decision or project, please contact Larry R. Velarde, Pleasant Grove Ranger District Recreation Staff Officer, at 390 North 100 East, Pleasant Grove, Utah 84062, or by phone at (801) 785-3563

VII. SIGNATURE AND DATE

I have concluded that this decision may be categorically excluded from documentation in and environmental impact statement of environmental assessment, as it is within one of the categories identified in 36 CFR 220.6 (e), and there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the decision that may result in a significant individual or cumulative environmental effect. My conclusion is based on information presented in this document and the entirety of the planning record.

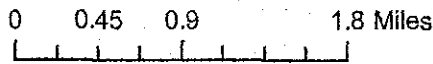
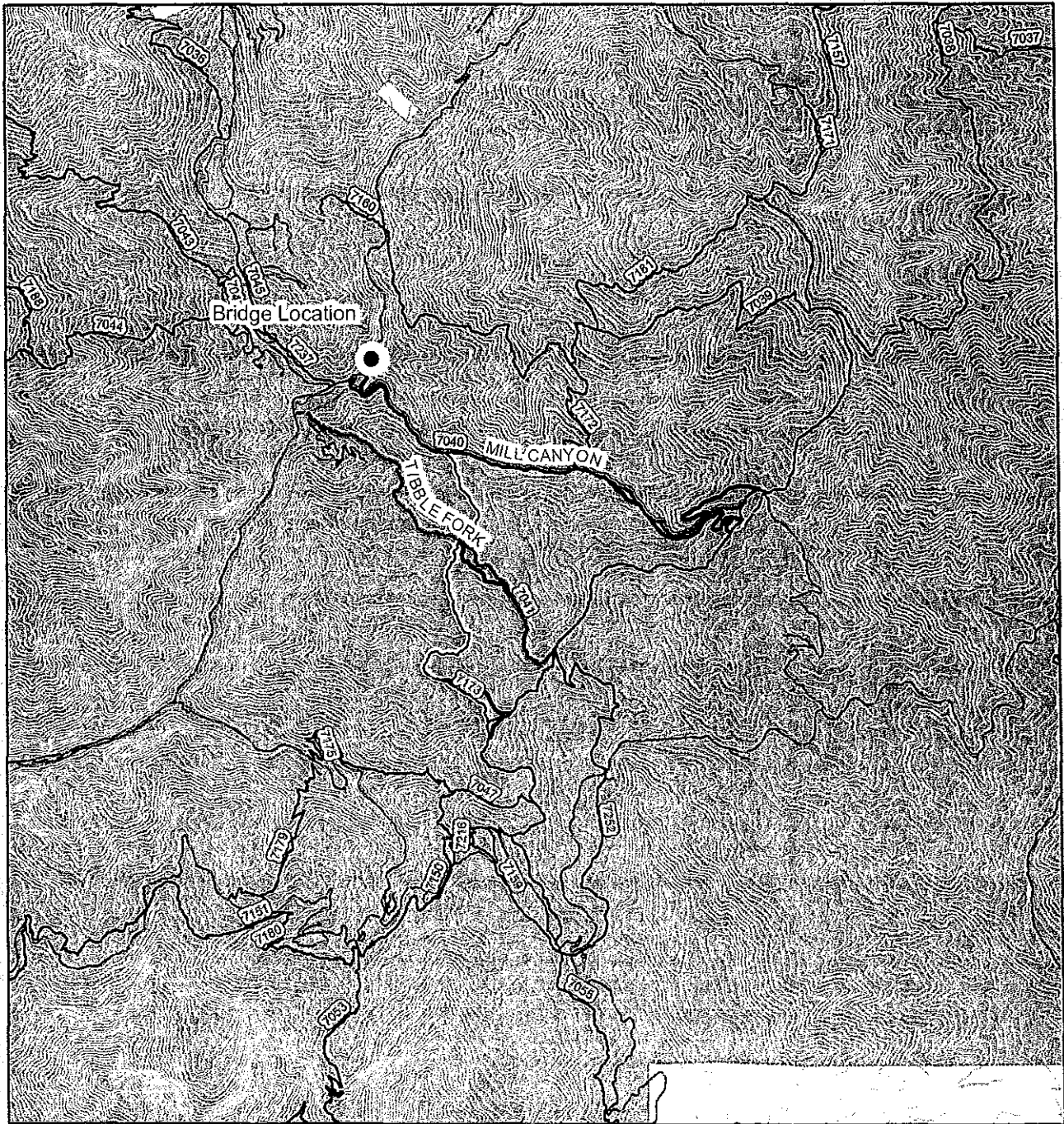


JOHN R. LOGAN
District Ranger
Pleasant Grove Ranger District



Date

Proposed Trail Reroutes & Bridge Construction



Legend

- Trails
- Mud Springs Trail #173
- Mill Canyon Trail #040
- Tibble Fork Trail #041
- Roads