

MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION

US Forest Service
Inyo National Forest
California Department of Parks and
Recreation

SCH No. 2007084005)

March 28, 2008

MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION

Pursuant to: Division 13, Public Resources Code

Description:

The Inyo National Forest and California State Parks proposes to construct an interpretive trail from the Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area Visitor Center to the "Old Marina" recreation site within the Mono Lake Tufa State Reserve. The project area is located within the Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area and lays just northwest of the Scenic Area Visitor Center, ¼ mile north of Lee Vining, CA and is within the Mono Lake Ranger District, Inyo National Forest, California.

Determination

An Environmental Assessment/Initial Study has been prepared by the US Forest Service. On the basis of this study it is determined that the proposed action with the incorporation of the identified mitigation measures will not have a significant effect on the environment for the following reasons:

The following mitigation measures would be implemented by DPR and USFS as part of the Mono Lake Trail Project within the California Tufa State Reserve and Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area:

Aesthetics

- Natural colors and materials will be used whenever possible.
- Disturbed areas will be planted with native vegetation.
- Interpretive panels should be designed to reduce glare and compliment the natural colors and textures of the project area.
- The interpretive barrier and boardwalk should be constructed with materials that are context sensitive to the Scenic Area.

Hydrology and Water Quality

- Soil disturbing activities will not be initiated during periods of heavy rain or excessively wet soils.

- Immediately following completion of approved ground disturbing activities and seeding, all areas of ground disturbance will be mulched with weed free straw, wood chips, bark, jute mat, etc.
- Check dams and sediment barriers (i.e., silt fence, weed-free hay bales, wattles, etc.) will be placed in all temporary erosion channels with minimum sufficient spacing to control runoff velocity and encourage sediment deposition.
- Water bars (12 to 18 inches deep) and cross drains will be constructed across all roads, trails, and other disturbed areas after seeding and fertilization at 50, 75, Or 100 foot-intervals as a function of slope angle, or as necessary, to disperse surface runoff. The frequency will be sufficient to prevent rill erosion and sediment delivery channel formation. Alternatively “parabolic slope water bars” may be constructed at the gradient beginning at the center of the road or trail surface and traversing outward to spill into undisturbed vegetation on both sides of the road or trail prism. Waterbars and outlets will be inspected seasonally, maintained and cleared of sediments at regular intervals.
- Prior to construction, a construction access plan will be developed detailing access routes to pertinent project elements.

Hazards and Hazardous Materials

- Equipment will be cleaned and repaired (other than emergency repairs) outside of parkboundaries. All contaminated water, sludge, spill residue, or other hazardous compounds will be disposed of outside park boundaries, at a lawfully permitted or authorized destination.

Native Plants and Noxious Weeds

- Monitor all construction areas and roadways within the project area annually for at least five growing seasons and treat any noxious weeds found.
- In all areas where grading or soil disturbance will occur, stockpile topsoil and re-spread topsoil following slope grading and prior to re-seeding. Stockpiled soil will be protected from wind and water erosion.
- Local seeding guidelines will be used to determine detailed procedures and appropriate mixes. Preference is given to local seed sources, cultivars, and species available commercially. To avoid weed contamination, all seed purchases shall be certified weed-seed free.
- Before ground disturbing activities begin, identify and locate all equipment staging areas. Treat existing noxious weeds in these areas prior to staging of any equipment.
- Prior to construction the disturbance limits of the project will be flagged. Pop fencing, flagging or a staked rope line will be established to denote the limits of construction proximate to sensitive resource boundaries.

Wildlife

- An “interpretive barrier” will be constructed to act as a deterrent for those who consider access to the shoreline via the user-created trail network and as a venue for education and interpretation.
- Education materials will be in the form of interpretive panels designed to raise awareness about the needs of the area wildlife and deter visitors from leaving the established trail. Pictures of muddy shoes lost in the alkali muck and nesting shoreline birds will be used to illustrate the reasons why visitors should not travel away from the trail.
- User trails in the sensitive wetland area will be monitored by annually photographing the condition and extent of user trails in the area. If it is determined that visitors are not respecting the voluntary “closure” of the wetland area, the Forest Service and California State Parks reserve the right to establish a seasonal closure of the area through appropriate legal mechanisms.

Mike Schlafmann
Deputy District Ranger, Mammoth and Mono
Lake Ranger Districts
Inyo National Forest

Date

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3.27.08

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