



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Highway
Administration**

Western Federal Lands Highway Division
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October 1, 2012

In Reply Refer To: HFL-17

Re: ID PFH 60(2), Manning Crevice Bridge Project
Public Notice for Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act *De Minimis* Impact
Determination

To whom it may concern:

The Western Federal Lands Highway Division of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service Nez Perce National Forest (USFS), the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and Idaho County, proposes to replace the Manning Crevice Bridge (MCB) on Forest Highway 60 over the Salmon River 14.3 miles east of Riggins, Idaho (Figure 1). The USFS manages the land north of the bridge and the BLM manages the land to the south.

Section 4(f) of the Department Of Transportation Act (Section 4[f]) stipulates that the FHWA cannot approve the use of land from publicly owned parks, recreational areas, wildlife and waterfowl refuges, or public and private historical sites to incorporate into a transportation facility unless the following conditions apply:

- There is no feasible and prudent alternative to the use of land.
- The action includes all possible planning to minimize harm to the property resulting from use.

OR

- The project has only a de minimis (minimal) impact on lands subject to Section 4(f). Once the FHWA determines that a transportation use of Section 4(f) property results in a de minimis (minimal) impact and the official with jurisdiction over the Section 4(f) property agrees, analysis of avoidance alternatives are not required and the Section 4(f) evaluation process is complete.

Currently, the MCB Project is expected to use land from the Lower Salmon River Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA) and a section of the Lower Salmon River corridor within a Wild and Scenic River study area from Long Bar to Hammer Creek that is being considered for a recreational designation. The Lower Salmon River SRMA and Lower Salmon River Wild and Scenic study area are considered Section 4(f) recreational area properties. A trail (Salmon River Trail) just northeast of the existing MCB that runs eastward parallel to the Salmon River is within the Lower Salmon River SRMA and under USFS ownership although the trail is not maintained (Figure 1). This trail is also considered to be a component of the Lower Salmon River SRMA Section 4(f) recreational property. The use of the Lower Salmon River SRMA, Lower Salmon River Wild and Scenic study area and Salmon River Trail will result in a de minimis (minimal) impact if the impact will not adversely affect the features, attributes, or activities that qualify these Section 4(f) properties as recreational areas.

According to the 1988 BLM *Recreation Management Plan for the Lower Salmon River Vinegar Creek to Hammer Creek* (Recreation Plan), the Lower Salmon River special recreation area includes areas that are

one-quarter mile from the Salmon River (BLM 1988:1). The entire MCB footprint is located within the Lower Salmon River SRMA. One of the goals of the Recreation Plan is “to help protect the values for which the... [Vinegar Creek to Hammer Creek] segment was nominated for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System” (BLM 1988:1). Therefore, the features, attributes, or activities that make the Lower Salmon River SRMA a recreational area apply to the Lower Salmon River Wild and Scenic study area as well.

Based on the 1988 BLM Recreation Plan, 2009 BLM Resource Management Plan and a December 7, 2010 BLM letter to the FHWA, the features, attributes and activities that qualify the Lower Salmon River SRMA and the Lower Salmon River Wild and Scenic study area as recreational areas include a number of recreational activities and scenic and aesthetic values. Recreational activities that occur on the river beaches, road pulloffs, campgrounds, boat ramps, access roads, and trails include, but are not limited to: camping; hiking; climbing; enjoying scenery or natural features; nature study; photography; horseback riding; spelunking; hunting (big game, small game, upland birds, waterfowl); ski touring and snowshoeing; swimming; diving (skin and scuba); fishing; canoeing, sailing; river running (non-motorized craft); ORV use (4-WD, dune buggy, dirt bike, snowmobile); power boating; picnicking; rock collecting; wood gathering; auto touring; downhill skiing; snowplay; ice skating; water skiing and other water sports; hang gliding; interpretive use; and rustic resorts and organized camps (BLM 1988: Appendix A). The MCB Project construction activities are expected all-year-round and could potentially affect any of these recreational activities. To avoid adverse impacts, the MCB Project will need to retain public access to and not significantly disrupt these activities.

Visual impacts to the Lower Salmon River SRMA and the Lower Salmon River Wild and Scenic study area are important (BLM 2010). The MCB Project must “not alter the free flowing nature, measurably diminish outstandingly remarkable values, or modify the setting or level of development that will change... [the Lower Salmon River Wild and Scenic study area’s] identified Recreational classification” (BLM 2010). The MCB Project must also be consistent with the BLM Visual Resource Management (VRM) class II area to avoid significant impacts to the Lower Salmon River SRMA. To avoid adverse impacts to scenic and aesthetic values, the MCB Project must blend into the existing landscape and be consistent with landscape form, line, color, and texture elements (BLM 2010).

The BLM and USFS co-own and administer the Lower Salmon River SRMA and the Lower Salmon River Wild and Scenic study area and are considered the officials with jurisdiction over these Section 4(f) properties. As the officials with jurisdiction, Section 4(f) requires that the BLM and USFS concur in writing that the MCB Project Section 4(f) use of the Lower Salmon River SRMA and the Lower Salmon River Wild and Scenic study area will result in a de minimis (minimal) impact because the impact will not adversely affect the features, attributes, or activities that qualify these Section 4(f) properties as recreational areas.

The FHWA is committed to working with the BLM and USFS to assure that any MCB Project impacts will not adversely affect the features, attributes, or activities that qualify the Section 4(f) properties as recreational areas. The FHWA has agreed to coordinate all construction activities with foreseeable recreational activities to avoid any prolonged disruptions or delays. The current FHWA Salmon River Road Project from the Lake Creek Bridge to the Spring Bar Campground provides a model for how FHWA can avoid prolonged disruptions or delays to recreational activities. The FHWA will mirror these efforts for the MCB Project. The FHWA has also agreed to work with a landscape architect to assure that

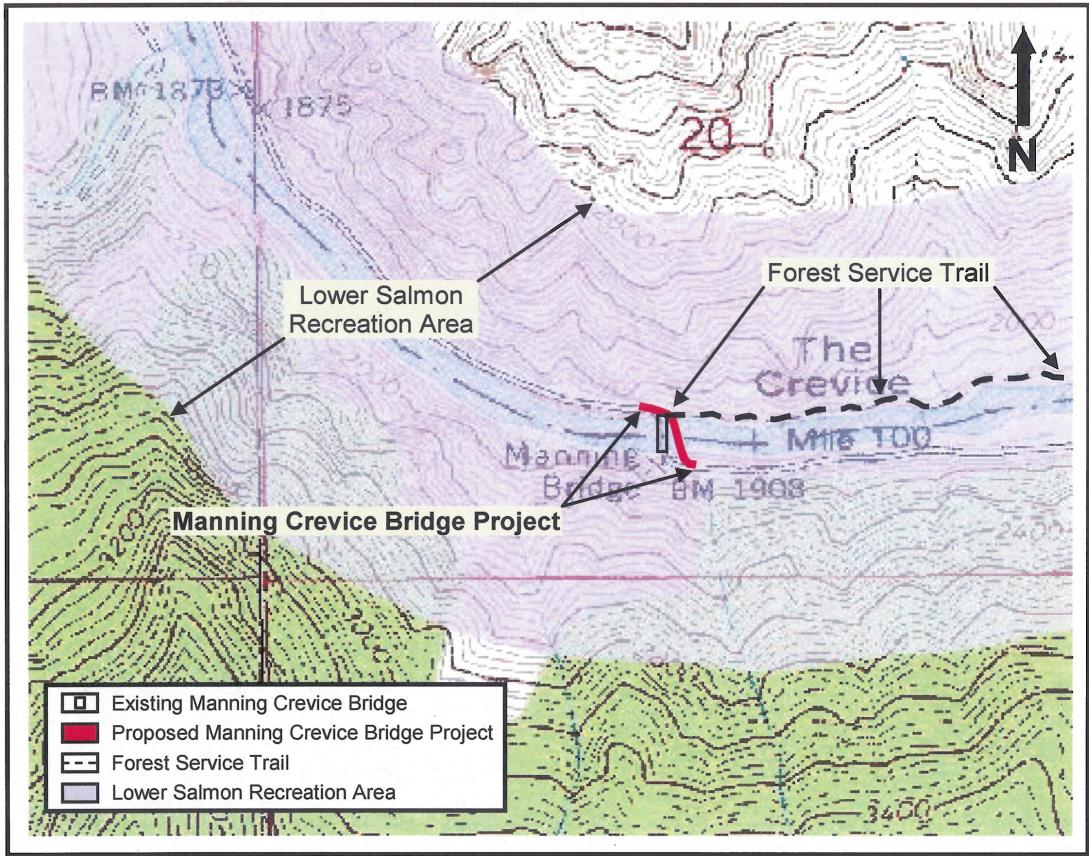


Figure 1. Manning Crevice Bridge Project and Section 4(f) recreation resources on a USGS topographic map.

the MCB Project blends into the existing landscape and is consistent with landscape form, line, color, and texture elements.

Currently, the MCB Project design will shift the MCB northern abutment 50 feet to the east of the existing MCB. This shift will use approximately 50 feet of the Salmon River Trail, considered an element of the SRMA, located just northeast of the existing MCB abutment on the north side of the Salmon River (Figure 1). At this location, the Salmon River Trail meets the Salmon River Road and the MCB. According to the USFS, the Salmon River Trail likely continued along the Salmon River Road route toward Riggins and was demolished by the construction of the existing Salmon River Road. The FHWA has determined that the use of this 50 feet portion of the Salmon River Trail will result in a de minimis (minimal) impact because the impact will not adversely affect the features, attributes, or activities that qualify the SRMA Section 4(f) property as a recreational area. The FHWA will not bisect or segment the Salmon River Trail and the trail will retain continuity for its use from the MCB and eastward. Use of the Salmon River Trail will only temporarily be disrupted during construction. The FHWA will enhance this portion of the trail by improving the "trailhead" that will now begin at the newly proposed MCB northeastern abutment. Enhancements to the trail include a ramp leading from the newly proposed MCB abutment to the trail to accommodate horseback riding and hikers and possibly signage for a trailhead.

Section 4(f) requires that the FHWA post a public notice and an opportunity for public review and comment concerning the effects on the protected activities, features, or attributes of the recreational Section 4(f) properties. This public posting intends to serve that purpose.

If you have any comments, questions, or need any additional information, please contact Michael Schurke at 360-619-7636 or by e-mail at michael.schurke@fhwa.dot.gov.

Sincerely yours,



Michael Schurke, M.A., RPA
FHWA Archaeologist