



File Code: 1950
Date: May 22, 2020

Dear Reader,

The Lookout Mountain Ranger District of the Ochoco National Forest is proposing to create a multi-use summer trail system associated with the Bandit Springs Sno-Park and Trailhead and an equestrian trail system associated with Dry Creek Horse Camp. The Bandit Springs project area is located off Highway 26 about 30 miles northeast of Prineville, Oregon (Maps 1 and 2). The Dry Creek project area is located north of the Dry Creek Horse Camp, about 20 miles northeast of Prineville, Oregon (Maps 1 and 3).

Background

The Forest Service has been working with the Ochoco Trails Strategy Group (OTSG) since 2016 to develop proposals for non-motorized sustainable trail systems on the Ochoco National Forest and Crooked River National Grassland that meet current demand for recreation opportunities. OTSG is a collaborative with representation from various user groups, such as equestrians, hikers, and mountain bikers, as well as community members and volunteer organizations. The trails projects described below were presented to the Ochoco National Forest by OTSG.

Proposed Action

The Bandit Springs Summer Trails project would create approximately 6.5 miles of non-motorized summer trails for multiple uses including hiking, biking, and horseback riding. The summer trails would be built in the existing Bandit Springs non-motorized winter trail corridor. The winter trails currently have a cleared winter trail corridor but no tread; therefore, the proposal includes creating new tread (18"x 36") within the most suitable area of the trail corridor. This project also includes retreading 5.6 miles of existing non-motorized summer and winter multiple use trails (Ponderosa Loop Trail and McGinnis Creek Trail), installing 4"x4" signposts at trailheads and junctions, and removing any trees or brush less than 10 inches in diameter encroaching on the trails. All work would be completed with hand tools, chainsaws, and a mini excavator. Clearing obstacles, brush, and small trees for the summer trails would help facilitate skiing and snowshoeing in low-snow winters.

The Dry Creek Equestrian Trails project would designate approximately 5 miles of non-motorized system trails on closed roads in the vicinity of Dry Creek Horse Camp. There are designated system trails associated with Dry Creek Horse Camp; however, users often add mileage or add to their experience on closed roads. The OTSG has proposed these closed road routes be designated as official system trails with signage and reassurance trail markers. The closed roads would be left as two track, double wide riding trails for side by side riding. Trails would be open to all non-motorized uses but would be maintained for and by equestrian users. 4"x4" sign posts would be installed at trail entrances and junctions and drainage dips and water bars would be installed to reduce erosion and facilitate drainage.

Invitation to Comment

We welcome your thoughts and discussions about both the Bandit Springs Summer Trails project and the Dry Creek Equestrian Trails project. Your input is a vital part of our planning process and your comments are appreciated throughout the planning process. However, for your input to be timely and considered in project design, it would be most helpful if we receive your comments by June 21, 2020.

We strongly encourage you to submit comments electronically. Those wishing to provide electronic comments should use the Forest Service online comment system available at:



<https://cara.ecosystem-management.org/Public//CommentInput?Project=58064>. Comments may be typed into the online form, or uploaded as an attachment in Microsoft Word, rich text format (rtf), or portable document format (PDF) only.

Comments may also be submitted in writing. Written comments should be sent or delivered to Elysia Retzlaff, NEPA Planner, Ochoco National Forest, 3160 NE 3rd Street, Prineville, OR 97754. Hand-delivered comments will only be accepted by appointment due to the current COVID-19 pandemic. Please call Elysia Retzlaff at 541-416-6436 if you would like to set up an appointment to hand-deliver your comments.

This letter also serves as an invitation to participate in the Forest's National Historic Preservation Act, Section 106 process for the project.

Please see the enclosed map for details on the location of these projects. Maps of the project areas and this scoping letter are also available online at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=58064>. If you need additional information, please contact Elysia Retzlaff at 541-416-6436 or elysia.retzlaff@usda.gov.

Sincerely,



SLATER R. TURNER
District Ranger

Enclosure