



File Code: 1950

Date: 18 January, 2018

Subject: Scoping Letter for Gateway Phase 2 Trail Project

TO: Interested Party

Dear Interested Party:

The Shasta-Trinity National Forest, Shasta-McCloud Management Unit is proposing to expand the current Gateway Trail System to include four new trailheads on existing roads, connected by non-motorized, multi-use trails¹, with an emphasis for mountain biking (Gateway Phase 2 Trail Project). The project may also connect to a future trailhead located on City of Mt. Shasta property on South Mt. Shasta Blvd.² The Project lies within the vicinity of the Gateway Trailhead, McBride Springs Campground, the City of Mt. Shasta, and the Mt. Shasta Ski Park. The project is located near the City of Mt. Shasta, CA within all or portions of T40N, R4W, Sections 2, 3, 4, 11, 12, 13, 14, 22, 23 and 24; T40N, R3W Sections 6,7, 8, 16, 17, 18 and 20 Mount Diablo Meridian. [Please see enclosed project map.]

We are preparing to conduct National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis for this project. This letter includes a description of the purpose and need for action, the proposed action, as well as public participation in this process.

Your Involvement

You are invited to participate in the NEPA analysis for the Gateway Phase 2 Trail Project by providing comments to us during this public scoping period, January 22 to February 22, 2018. We would like to know your concerns for the proposed action, and if the proposed action suits the needs of you as a user, person interested in national forest management, or community member. The proposed project is an activity implementing a land management plan and not authorized under the HFRA and is subject to 36 CFR 218 Subparts A and B (per § 218.7). Pursuant to 36 CFR 218, Subparts A and B only those who submit timely project-specific written comments during a public comment period are eligible to file an objection. Individuals or representatives of an entity submitting comments must sign the comments or verify identity upon request. Pursuant 36 CFR 218.2, specific written comments should be within the scope of the proposed action, have a direct relationship to the proposed action, and must include supporting reasons for the responsible official to consider.

¹ A non-motorized multi-use trail is open to hiking, trail running, biking and equestrian use, although sections of some trails may not be optimal for all uses.

² The trailhead on the City of Mt. Shasta property is not a part of the decision to be made on the Gateway Phase 2 since it is not on national forest system lands, but the alignment of trails on national forest lands would be designed to link up to it. Approval for use of that trailhead, and a 0.50 mile connecting trail on City of Mt. Shasta lands would be under the authority of the City of Mt. Shasta.



For environmental analysis we are seeking information on resource impacts. For the National Historical Preservation Act, we are seeking information on historic or cultural values. The most useful comments provide new information or describe unwanted environmental effects potentially caused by the proposed action and should include resource concerns you believe should be considered before a decision on the proposal is reached. If you have information you feel we may not be aware of or feel there are issues³ regarding potential effects of this proposed action, please send those issues in writing to Carolyn Napper, District Ranger ATTN: Becky Cooper at the address above. You may also submit comments via email to: comments-pacificsw-shasta-trinity-mtshasta-mccloud@fs.fed.us. For questions or clarifications, see the phone number above.

Providing your comments within 30 days of the scoping notice in the Redding Record Searchlight will be most useful for us to consider your input during the analysis. A public scoping meeting will be held at the Mt. Shasta City Park Upper Lodge, located at 1315 Nixon Road, Mt. Shasta, CA on January 29, 2018 at 5:00 pm. To assist us in identifying issues and concerns, comments should be as specific as possible. Please be aware that the comments received, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be part of the public record for this proposed action. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered; however, anonymous comments will not provide the Agency with the ability to provide the respondent with subsequent environmental documents.

Purpose and Need for Action / Proposed Action

The National Forest Management Act requires proposed projects to be consistent with the forest plan of the administrative unit where a project is proposed. The *Shasta-Trinity National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan* (Forest Plan) provides management direction for this project:

- Manage the Shasta-Trinity National Forest's land base and resources to provide a variety of high quality outdoor recreation experiences (Forest Plan p. 4-5);
- Work with rural communities to help diversify their economic base (Forest Plan p. 4-5);
- Promote partnerships with user groups to assist in the operation, maintenance, and development of recreation sites and facilities (Forest Plan p. 4-24);
- Trails and trail bridges will be located, designed, constructed, and maintained so that they are suitable for the type of travel being served (Forest Plan 4-17);
- Develop or expand city-to-forest and other day use trail opportunities (Forest Plan 4-24).

The purpose of this project is to increase non-motorized recreational opportunities for hiking, trail running, mountain biking and equestrian use around the City of Mt. Shasta by expanding the existing Gateway Trail system. There is a need for the trail expansion due to an increased demand for non-motorized, multi-use trails as evidenced by the use of the Gateway Trail System, the construction of approximately 30 miles of unauthorized user-created trails, and the development of the Mt. Shasta Conceptual Trails Plan by the Mt. Shasta Trail Association. That plan provided the basis for this proposal. There is also an opportunity for this trail system to make the City of

³ An "issue" as defined here is a statement of cause and effect, linking environmental effects to proposed actions. Opinions such as support or opposition to a project are useful to gauge public opinion, but they do not contribute to the analysis of environmental effects.

Mt. Shasta a mountain biking destination for recreational riders from out of the area. This model has been shown to provide substantial economic benefits to recreation and tourism based business and services within communities like Mt. Shasta.

To meet this need for additional quality recreational opportunities, reduce unauthorized trail construction, and to realize potential economic benefits to the community, we propose to construct four (4) additional trailheads on existing roads, and to connect them with a network of sustainable non-motorized multi-user trails. We also propose to expand the McBride Springs campground to accommodate increased use. Trails in the Gateway Phase 2 extension would be located to access scenic vistas and provide a pleasant user experience while at the same time, emphasize sustainability and low maintenance costs. These trails would be open to hiking, trail running, mountain biking and equestrian use, although not all trails would be optimal for all uses. For example, some trails may be designed for single uses such as downhill mountain bike riding to promote those uses, create high quality user experiences, and provide for sustainability and user safety. This proposal implements a portion of the *Mt. Shasta Conceptual Trail Plan* identified as a 'high priority route', with modifications to meet the project objectives that are based on field reconnaissance, topography, and on-the-ground verification.

The project area is characterized by pine plantations (hand planted trees) and mixed conifer forest managed for multiple uses under the direction in the Forest Plan. Evidence of land management (including prescribed burning, thinning, etc.) will continue in the trail vicinity. The Gateway Phase 2 Trail Project would connect to the existing Gateway trail system, the Mt. Shasta Ski Park (which operates an existing mountain bike trail network), the McBride Springs Campground, and the John Everitt Memorial Vista Point (via existing Forest system roads). Trailhead locations would be anywhere from approximately 5 to 20 minutes' drive from the City of Mt. Shasta, the largest population center adjacent to the Shasta-McCloud Management Unit.

Proposed Action

This Proposed Action is intended to meet the need for additional non-motorized recreation in the greater Mt. Shasta area. This action implements elements of the conceptual trail design developed by the MSTA and Bike Shasta in partnership with the Forest Service. The Proposed Action has four components:

1. Construction of additional trailheads;
2. Construction of a network of multi-use, non-motorized trails;
3. Expansion of the McBride Springs Campground; and
4. Decommissioning of unauthorized, user-created trails.

Trailheads

Construct four (4) new trailhead parking lots with varying levels of development, some of which may be co-located with existing recreational facilities on national forest system lands as follows.

1. McBride Springs Trailhead: trailhead to be located on national forest system lands within an existing general forest area used for dispersed recreation use and accessed via a spur road directly across from McBride Springs Campground off the Everitt Memorial Highway. New infrastructure to include parking for 10-15 vehicles, information kiosk, and trail signs.

2. Ten Gallon Trailhead: trailhead to be located on national forest system lands within an existing clearing (previous log landing) and accessed via existing Forest Road 40N76 near the intersection of Everitt Memorial Highway. New infrastructure to include parking for 50 vehicles, information kiosk, and trail signs.
3. Vista Point Trailhead: trailhead to be located on national forest system lands at the existing Everitt Memorial Vista Point day-use site, off the Everitt Memorial Highway with existing parking for 10 vehicles. New infrastructure to include information kiosk and trail signs.
4. Nordic Center Trailhead: trailhead to be located on national forest system lands at the existing Nordic Center parking area at the intersection of Forest Roads 41N31 and 40N88 with existing parking for approximately 50-75 vehicles. New infrastructure to include vault toilet and trail signs.

The Gateway Phase 2 trail system can be linked at a future time to a conceptual additional trailhead on South Mt. Shasta Boulevard, located on City of Mt. Shasta property along South Mt. Shasta Boulevard. This trailhead is subject to final approval from the City of Mt. Shasta, and although it is not included in the Proposed Action, the Gateway Phase 2 Trail would be designed to link to it with the potential future construction of 0.5 miles of connecting trail on City property. Additionally, the proposed action will connect to the Mt. Shasta Ski Park, which commercially operates an existing network of mountain biking trails on private land, and will connect to McBride Springs Campground.

Trailheads will be located outside the County of Siskiyou and California State Highway right-of-way and therefore encroachment permits from the County or Caltrans will not be necessary. The existing aprons at the existing intersections will provide access to the trailheads.

New trailhead parking lot areas will be cleared of brush and graveled using heavy equipment. At trailheads to be co-located with existing parking facilities, native surface will remain and improvements will consist of signage, natural parking barriers, and additional base rock. Resulting slash will be disposed of by means of burning, chipping or removal.

Trails

An interlocking network of non-motorized multi-user trails, with an emphasis on mountain biking would be constructed to connect the trailheads previously described. Trails would be designed to access scenic vistas and provide a pleasant user experience with an emphasis on sustainability and low maintenance. About one mile of existing non-system trails that meet appropriate design criteria, and approximately 1.3 miles of existing non-system trails realigned to meet design criteria would be included in this network. About 0.25 miles of existing roads would be used as connections through sensitive areas such as stream crossings. An estimated 45 miles of trails are needed to connect the trailheads and provide the desired user experience and sustainability standards; however actual on-the-ground trail length may vary with final design considerations. The new trails may be constructed in using a mini excavator weighing up to 10,660 pounds, and/or a trail specific backhoe or mini-dozer such as a SWECO. Some trail construction may be proceeded by use of a masticator to reduce and treat brush. Other trail segments may need to be entirely constructed with hand tools. Trail finish work will be done using hand tools. The attached map provides the proposed location of the Gateway Phase 2 Trail expansion.

Utilizing modern sustainable trail construction techniques such as frequent grade reversals, stacked

loop trail system layout, and enhanced natural features, these trails would provide for a wide variety of recreation opportunities to the public, and eliminate the need for the on-going construction of unauthorized mountain bike trails.

The Proposed Action includes adoption of some existing non-system, recreational trails. Adoption of these unauthorized trails will include realignment and reconstruction as needed to bring them up to current Forest Service standards. This could include modifying the grade, adjusting the width (36-48 inches depending on the location of the trail), improving drainage, and brushing, which may include removal of trees less than 12" dbh along the existing or proposed trails. Trees larger than 12" dbh could be cut if approved by the Forest Service. To meet the Forest Plan's call for the provision of a variety of high quality recreational experiences while protecting wildlife and meeting water quality objectives, unsuitable user-created trails in the project area will be rehabilitated. Once the trail system is brought up to standard, it will be adopted into the National Forest transportation system.

New trail construction trail design parameters from Forest Service Handbook 2309.18 will be used to guide construction. Managed uses will include hiker/pedestrian, mountain bike, trail running, and pack and saddle. The Forest Service trail classification will be Trail Class 2 – Moderately Developed. These trails are typically single lane (maximum 24" width), native materials, and obstacles may be common, substantial and intended to increase challenge. Design and construction will emphasize considerations for high quality user experiences, low maintenance and sustainability.

The final design will be based upon maximum avoidance of potentially sensitive resources as identified through the NEPA process. Resource protection and avoidance measures will be incorporated into the project to the extent feasible. The project intends to incorporate resource protection measures including, but not limited to the following:

- Cultural resource surveys and avoidance of identified resources;
- Botanical resource surveys and avoidance of identified resources;
- Wildlife surveys and avoidance of sensitive habitat and seasons (during construction) as necessary;
- Wetland and riparian habitat avoided where trail construction or reconstruction would prevent restoration or maintenance of ecological health of watersheds and aquatic systems (Aquatic Conservation Strategy (ACS) objectives),
- Analysis of impacts to hydrologic resources and impact reduction measures implemented in trail siting and design;
- Fuel management considered and incorporated into project;
- Soil erosion best management practices incorporated in project design and maintenance;
- Weed reduction measures will include cleaning of equipment using an appropriate method for the current conditions to reduce introduction and spread of invasive plant species and use of weed-free mulch.
- On-site borrowing of materials for trail tread is encouraged wherever appropriate.

As additional resource needs are identified through project scoping and with the direction of the USFS Interdisciplinary Team additional measures will be incorporated into the project to minimize impacts.

McBride Springs Campground Expansion

Construct an additional camping loop of approximately 10-12 new camping sites that will accommodate modern recreation vehicle sizes with both pull-through and back-in camping spurs. Each site will include: picnic table, fire ring, bear box, and tent pad and meet accessibility requirements. The new loop will be surfaced with either chip seal or asphalt.

Unauthorized Trail Decommissioning

There are approximately 30 miles of unauthorized trail segments that may be decommissioned to restore soil health, productivity, and improve overall watershed condition. Unauthorized trails not included in the project may be decommissioned using a variety of techniques including natural restoration, subsoiling, and/or full recontouring. The type of treatment implemented will depend on the specific location and site conditions. Areas that are actively eroding may be subsoiled and recontoured to foster vegetative recovery and improve overall site stability.

Implementation:

If approved, project construction is expected to begin in 2019 and to be completed by 2022. Construction of trail segments between the Gateway Trail and McBride Springs, and on the south side of the project near the Bear Springs road may need to be scheduled around implementation of Forest Service insect and disease projects in these areas that are reasonably foreseeable. Major funding for construction of the Gateway Phase 2 Trail has been provided by the McConnell Foundation. National forest funds or other grant monies may also be used for construction of new trails and decommissioning of unauthorized user-created trails.

Decision to be Made

The District Ranger will decide whether to implement the proposed action, implement an alternative action that meets the purpose and need or take no action.

If you have any questions about this proposal or need additional information, please contact Carolyn Napper at (530) 926-9620 or Becky Cooper at (530) 926-9610.

We appreciate your interest in the management of our public lands and look forward to hearing from you.



Carolyn O. Napper
District Ranger

Enclosures:
Project Map