BACKGROUND

The Winsor Trail (#254) is a National Recreation Trail and is heavily used by the recreating public. It extends from the trailhead in Tesuque, travels upstream to the Santa Fe Ski Basin, and then across the Pecos Wilderness to Cowles, NM north of Pecos, NM. The section for this proposal is from the Tesuque trail head to the Santa Fe Ski Basin. Along this trail segment there are numerous sections in need of improvement for sustainability, safety, and improved user enjoyment. The trail is currently open to hiking, mountain biking and equestrians; no motorized use is allowed. All locations for proposed reroutes and trail work are outside of the Pecos Wilderness (see attached map).

The Winsor Trail proposed re-routes would enhance the sustainability of the Winsor trail, increase user safety, and provide an improved recreational experience to a diversity of users.

Figure 1. Winsor Trail has parallel trails through the adjoining meadows above Borrego/Bear Wallow Trail
DECISION

I have decided to approve the three sections of trail projects along the Winsor Trail as described below and defer the proposed gabions for a future decision. The actions are as follows:

Section A: The Santa Fe Fat Tire Society is requesting that the Forest Service leave open a re-routed section of original trail just below the Norski Trailhead. This original section of trail is very rocky and would remain sustainable with the use of erosion control features that would be installed by volunteers. The intent would be to provide users (primarily mountain bikers) with two options along this section of the Winsor Trail. The original section would be designated with signage as the more technical route for advanced mountain bikers. The new re-route would be designated with signage as being less technical and intended for hikers, equestrian users, and novice mountain bikers. (See project record for map)

Section B: (re-route): This section passes through the meadow above the Borrego/Bear Wallow trail and is severely rutted, causing parallel trails to become established. The proposal is to build a more serpentine trail that would be less steep and more resistant to erosion. The curves in the trail would also encourage slower speeds by mountain bikers, which could lessen user conflicts and safety issues.

The old segment of trail going straight down the meadow would be reclaimed. (See project record for map)

Section C: (re-route & gabions): The area known as the “lower” Winsor has numerous creek crossings. Bridges have been installed by the volunteers. To eliminate the need for six more bridges along this one mile stretch, two short re-routes would be built to eliminate the need for crossing Tesuque Creek.

Note: The originally proposed gabion project in Section C (see project record for map) is being re-evaluated and will not be included in the final decision for this Winsor Trail Project document. The original length of 50’ for gabion work has increased and needs approval from the Army Corps of Engineers and additional environmental analysis.

The above actions along the Winsor trail are needed to improve the sustainability of certain sections of the Winsor trail. This project is scheduled for implementation in the spring of 2016.

This action is categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement (EIS) or an environmental assessment (EA). The applicable category of actions is identified in agency procedures as Categorical Exclusion under 36 CFR 220.6(e)(1): Construction and reconstruction of trails. This category of action(s) is applicable because the proposed Winsor Trail re-routes will repair and mitigate badly eroded sections of the trail by creating sustainable alternative sections of trail.

I find that there are no extraordinary circumstances that would warrant further analysis and documentation in an EA or EIS. I took into account resource conditions identified in agency procedures that should be considered in determining whether extraordinary circumstances might exist:

- Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species – No known threatened or endangered species are present at the location of the
proposed projects. There is potential for migratory birds in the area; no trees will be cut during migratory bird season (March 15 through September 15), or at a minimum conduct pre-activity surveys to ensure that project activities avoid impacts to protected or sensitive species.

- Flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds – None are present.
- Congressionally designated areas such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or national recreation areas – It could be proposed wilderness but this action would not affect potential wilderness standing
- Inventoried roadless areas or potential wilderness areas – Yes, it is within an IRA that could be potential wilderness; this action would not affect the potential for wilderness
- Research natural areas – No natural research areas; no effect
- American Indians and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites – There may be religious cultural sites adjacent to the trail, although the proposal will have no effect on them.
- Archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas – No sites were located during a 100% pedestrian survey: 2015-10-16.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

This action was originally listed as a proposal on the Santa Fe National Forest Schedule of Proposed Actions and updated periodically during the analysis. **Letters mailed to the following individuals and organizations:**

- New Mexico Volunteers for the Outdoors
- Sierra Club
- Wild Earth Guardians
- Wild Watershed
- Center for Biological Diversity
- NM Environmental Department, SWQB, NPS Section
- NM Dept. of Game & Fish
- Lynn Pickard
- Santa Fe Fat Tire Society
- Pedal Queens
- SF County Open Space & Trails, Santa Fe County
- Bishop’s Lodge
- Back Country Horsemen of NM
- Mike Chapman, The Broken Spoke
- David Bell, Mello Velo
- Kirk Rinehart, Spin Doc
- Rob and Charlie’s Bike Shop
- Karen Denison, Outspire LLC
• Georges and Sue Mally, Santa Fe Walkabouts LLC
• Charlie O’Leary, Santa Fe Conservation Trust
• Pueblo of Tesuque
• Pueblo of Nambe

FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS AND REGULATIONS
This decision is consistent with the Santa Fe National Forest Land Management Plan. The project was designed in conformance with Forest Plan goals and objectives, Forest-wide and Management Area specific direction, and standards and guidelines.

The project areas are located in Management Area D and L:
Management Area D: Emphasis is on providing outstanding opportunities for developed recreation and viewing scenery. Recreational opportunities center around trail use, and the Winsor Trail is both heavily used and designated as a National Recreation Trail.

Management Area L: The current management plan has the majority of the Winsor trail located in Management Area L with emphasis placed on providing semi-primitive non-motorized recreation opportunities. The plan also states that “these areas will receive priority in dispersed recreation management, trail and trailhead development, and trail maintenance.”

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW (APPEAL) OPPORTUNITIES
Not applicable.

IMPLEMENTATION DATE
April 15, 2016

CONTACT
For additional information concerning this decision, contact: Sanford “Sandy” Hurlocker, District Ranger, Espanola Ranger District, 1710 N. Riverside Dr., Espanola NM 87532, 505-753-7331