

OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

District: Payette National Forest, Krassel Ranger District
Project Name: Sugar Creek Storm Treatment and Ford Rehabilitation
Responsible Official: Anthony B. Botello, Krassel District Ranger
Project Contact: John Dixon, Hydrologist, 208-634-4639, jdixon@fs.fed.us
Scoping Period: Comments requested by April 30, 2016
Submit Comments: Via webform on the project webpage
Project Webpage: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=48822>

Project Description:

The Forest Service proposes to implement storm damage risk reduction road restoration treatments on approximately 4.5 miles of FS Road 51883 and restore the road ford crossing at Sugar Creek. The road is classified as a Level 2 closed road that allows for administrative and permitted use, and does not appear on the Motor Vehicle Use Map and has not been open to public use by full-size motor vehicles since 1995. Implementation of the proposed work would occur in summer of 2016 during low flow and prior to August 15th.

Road restoration treatments and closure could include the following actions: construction and maintenance of road drainage features; clean and maintain ditches; clean and maintain culvert inlets and outlets where needed; removal of road cut bank slough material to accommodate equipment access; restore native vegetation on road cutbanks and fill slopes; disturbance would be restricted to the road prism; road closure using boulders or earthen material; and road signage regarding road closures.

Restoration of the ford crossing at Sugar Creek would reestablish the natural channel geometry by reducing the over-widened channel by reconstructing the eroded stream banks using natural materials on site. Dead or down trees and clusters of riparian vegetation (alder and willow) would be collected within the riparian conservation area and transplanted along the channel to rebuild the banks. Ground disturbance would be restricted to a 50 foot buffer from road center. Additional barriers to prohibit motorized crossing of the ford may be constructed just outside the floodplain of Sugar Creek.

Purpose and Need:

The purpose of this project is to prevent further impacts to ESA protected fish species, designated critical habitat and protect fish habitat from sedimentation. Sugar Creek is considered critical habitat for Endangered Species Act listed Bull Trout, Steelhead trout and Chinook salmon and has been identified in the Forest Plan as a high priority area for restoration. Forest Service Road 51883 is located directly adjacent to Sugar Creek and includes a ford crossing. FS Road 51883 is estimated to be delivering 12 tons of sediment per year to Sugar Creek detrimentally affecting fish habitat. Based on similar projects, the storm damage risk reduction road restoration treatments is expected to reduce sediment delivery by approximately 50%. Restoration of the ford crossing and preventing motor vehicle traffic on FS Road 51883 and at the ford crossing will further reduce sediment inputs and reduce direct impacts to Chinook salmon and bull trout spawning redds.

This project is being evaluated as a categorical exclusion under the National Environmental Policy Act as provided for in 36CFR 220.6(e)(18) - *Restoring wetlands, streams, riparian areas or other water bodies by removing, replacing, or modifying water control structures such as, but not limited to, dams, levees,*

dikes, ditches, culverts, pipes, drainage tiles, valves, gates, and fencing, to allow waters to flow into natural channels and floodplains and restore natural flow regimes to the extent practicable where valid existing rights or special use authorizations are not unilaterally altered or canceled. As a categorical exclusion there are no additional designated public comment periods for this project so this “scoping” phase is the best opportunity for public input.

Project Area:

The project is located in Valley County approximately seven air miles southwest of Yellow Pine, Idaho within the Sugar Creek watershed, a tributary to the East Fork South Fork Salmon River.

